A case study of concerted cultivation: enrichment activities and middle-class families

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Declaration

I, Rafael Hernandez, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Thank you to my mother and father for everything.

Abstract

This research presents an analysis of parental motivations, within middle-class families, who enrolled their children to participate in enrichment activities based on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) courses and examines how children experience and feel being involved in enrichment activities. Enrichment activities are defined as activities that go beyond the school curriculum and do not involve rigorous academic examinations. This study is based on questionnaires, interviews and field notes involving ten parents and ten children who were interviewed during two different rounds of data collection. The overarching research questions were: 'How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?' and 'What are parents' motivations to engage their children in enrichment activities?'. Data were analysed using thematic analysis from a constructivist epistemological stance.

The results show that children tend to perceive STEAM enrichment activities as a relaxed and enjoyable experience due to the more flexible approach they offer compared to the traditional school approach. Parents' motivations tend to vary depending on the understanding of how others perceive education as a representation of knowledge and power. Middle-class parents appear to actively work in the construction of children's academic identities and personal development in connection with the social, cultural and academic opportunities readily available for their children. It was found that the concept of 'concerted cultivation' appears to be largely connected to the parental priorities and parental pressures that in some cases might also have an adverse impact on children's mental health. Consequently, it is proposed to move towards a causal model that permits children to enjoy their academically demanding experience at school with an amalgamation of enjoyment and excitement for learning. Future research should consider the mechanisms through which activities exert influence on children's academic and personal development, taking into consideration their mental health and personal wellbeing.

Impact Statement

Although there is a large literature examining enrichment activities and middle-class families, much research has focused on the conceptualisation of enrichment education and its values, benefits and impact on children's overall education; other available research has mainly focused on the influence of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) enrichment activities and their impact on children's career choices. At the same time, other studies that focused on surveying middle-class families, parental influences and elite education appear to discuss the impact of private education, STEAM co-curricular activities and out-of-school-hours enrichment programmes and their impact on academic and even socio-economic outcomes.

When conducting this study, I recognised that the existing literature on enrichment activities and the middle-class paid little attention to the feelings, emotions, perceptions and motivations of those involved in participating in enrichment activities. Therefore, I believe this research is one of the first that examines both the conceptualisation and understanding of out-of-school hours enrichment programmes and how children experience and feel participating in such programmes while attempting to identify and comprehend parents' motivations to enrol their children in enrichment activities. The data I collected provide evidence as to how children perceive and feel being involved enrichment activities. Likewise, the data I collected also provide an understanding as to what motivates middle-class parents to encourage their children to attend out-of-school hours enrichment activities and provide insights into the relationship between approaches to parenting and children's mental health.

This research therefore has the potential to: 1) repurpose the aims of out-of-school-hours enrichment educational programmes; 2) deepen the understanding of certain approaches to parenting and how these impact children's mental health; and 3) address the importance of children's wellbeing.

I have already used my findings for discussion at a professional development day in Brussels, addressing an audience mainly composed of academic researchers and educational practitioners. The discussion was centred on the value of raising awareness of how children's feelings and emotions play a key role in the way they experience their understanding and participation in STEAM holiday camps with particular emphasis on the 'Arts'. The discussion also led to a debate on parents' motivations to enhance their children's cultural capital and general knowledge through enrichment activities. As a result, the debate and further discussion of my key findings led participants to look for opportunities for further professional development in a specific borough in Brussels.

Overall, this research should encourage schools, state-funded educational institutions, museums, independent educational entities and their educators and practitioners to repurpose the planning and delivery of enrichment activities and its impact on children's mental health and wellbeing. I aim to continue using my findings to deepen the understanding of enrichment activities, approaches to parenting and their impact on children's wellbeing.

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List of Abbreviations

BERA   British Educational Research Association

EdD   Doctorate in Education

ERA   Education Reform Act

FOP   Foundation of Professionalism

GCSE   General Certificate Secondary Education

IFS   Institution-Focused Study

IOE   Institute of Education

MoE 1   Methods of Enquiry 1

MoE 2   Methods of Enquiry 2

PGCE   Postgraduate Certificate in Education

QTS   Qualified Teacher Status

STEAM   Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

STEM   Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

SMT   Senior Management Team

Reflective Statement

This thesis represents both the culmination of an academic phase and the beginning of a renewed professional career. My original decision to embark on a doctoral level study was taken to achieve the highest possible qualification in my profession so I could advise developing countries of ways to improve their standards in education. This doctoral course certainly opened my mind to think differently and at the same time, the course made me reflect on a wide range of educational theories and policies that enabled me to advance further in my academic and professional identity as a specialist in education.

My background and the development of my career in education in relation to my doctoral studies

I had begun my career in education when I decided to become a Modern Foreign Languages teacher in secondary schools in the United Kingdom. I initially applied for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course to teach Spanish, French and Italian with an aim to obtaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). However, after my first interview, at a university in north London, the interviewer encouraged me to abandon the idea of becoming a teacher as: "*at most, you will only be good to be a waiter at a good restaurant*". The interviewer added: "*you will never be able to become a secondary school teacher in any school in the UK …*".

Despite the initial drawback, I made the decision to work as a volunteer at a couple of schools in inner London so I could equip myself with a better insight and experience of what the British educational system offers. After a full academic year, I re-applied for a place on the PGCE course at the same university. Subsequently, I obtained a place to start the course. I hoped that my admission to the PGCE represented the beginning of a successful career as a secondary school teacher.

After a year as a fully qualified teacher, I still felt that I needed to advance further in my studies, so I made the decision to start a masters degree at the Institute of

Education (IOE). A couple of years later, I was able to complete my masters in School Effectiveness and School Improvement. The guidance of Dr Caroline Lodge and Professor Roger Slee during my masters degree undoubtedly inspired me to pursue a doctoral course. I was still convinced that good education plays a key role in the personal and professional success of any individual. Following the inspiration from my masters' tutors and my own conviction about the value of good education in people's lives, I consolidated my decision to start my doctoral studies with a focus on analysing an educational issue affecting society and how it could be interpreted through research.

Accordingly, I started my Doctoral in Education (EdD) with great enthusiasm and a myriad of expectations, always reflecting on how I could use research findings to address 'real life issues'. Thereafter, I recall thoroughly enjoying the Foundation of Professionalism (FoP) module as it represented the novelty of studying at a doctoral level while delving into current professional issues. This module helped me orientate my identity as a researcher. Undeniably, I had a good time in the FoP both researching and networking with my EdD colleagues.

The Methods of Enquiry 1 module (MoE 1) provided me with a different insight of what real world research is about. The concepts and academic developments emerging from this module helped me to understand how certain research paradigms are constructed in social science. The MoE 1 was a noteworthy experience and provided me with ways of thinking about how research questions are important, and what constitutes answers to questions within the social research context. The module also made aware of the importance of the methodology to support my research work. Later, the Methods on Enquiry 2 (MoE 2) module continued to enhance my understanding of methodologies, research methods and especially the relevance of qualitative research in social science. This module challenged me to think about the philosophical underpinning, theories and findings of social research. In addition, the MoE 2 also enabled me to gain valuable insights into undertaking meaningful research with an aim to improving professional practice.

The progression towards the Institution-Focused Study (IFS) was an exciting phase in my doctoral course. By the time I embarked on the data collection process and the subsequent data analysis phase of the IFS; I felt that I had sufficient knowledge to continue improving my theoretical understanding of current theories and issues related to methodologies and research methods. Nevertheless, I did not expect that my choice of the initial specialist course would eventually become a vast challenge in this part of my doctoral course.

I attended the initial specialist course: 'Rethinking Education: Psychoanalytic perspectives on Learning and Teaching' that allowed me to explore theories and approaches in my research field. As the course progressed, sessions became increasingly interesting to me. The course provided me with the opportunity to explore and learn a range of psychoanalytic theories using day-to-day examples. As a result, I found that the course had a direct and significant influence on my decision to use psychoanalytical theories in my IFS project. Accordingly, I decided to consult with my supervisor about how feasible it would be to use psychoanalytical theories into my IFS research.

After discussing with my supervisor my motivation to research psychoanalytic theories further and use them in the IFS I thought that I made the right choice. However, my lack of specialist knowledge in such a complex field created other challenges for me, as I found myself dedicating a considerable extra amount of time on my literature and framing of my IFS as exploring psychoanalytical theories required more knowledge and specialisation in the subject. Afterwards, I recognised that it was late for me to move away from the psychoanalytical focus of my research at that stage. Despite this challenging experience, I managed to enhance my professional practice with knowledge and expertise obtained during the IFS module. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to apply my findings and recommendations at my own professional institution with an aim to improving professional practice. In all, the IFS research provided me with a broader professional vision to become more effective, both as a researcher and as an educator.

On the whole, by the time I completed my IFS, I felt that I had strengthened my research skills, as I also felt more confident using a broader range of methods applied in social research nowadays.

Major obstacles and how I overcame them

Before embarking on the final step of my doctoral studies I became increasingly busy at work. The constant unforeseen demands of my managers at work worryingly stretched my professional capacity. Inevitably, I had to spend considerably longer hours at work so I could meet my managers' tight and unanticipated deadlines. The overwhelming number of Senior Management Team (SMT) requests to comply with deadlines, practically on an overnight basis, started to reflect on the time I would otherwise have dedicated to the writing of my doctoral proposal, as well as other aspects of my personal life.

This is when I became fully aware that busy work situations could be detrimental for the writing of my thesis. I constantly encountered problems dedicating 'normal and sufficient' time to my thesis; I found myself spending a lot of time reading books and searching for the latest journal articles late in the evening after a long day at work. I appreciate that work is very important, but I learned that it should not be allowed to get in the way of the doctoral studies, as there is no room to play catch up with a doctoral thesis.

Having this in mind, I resolved to speak to my supervisor, in one of our sporadic supervisory meetings. Nevertheless, I had no chance to speak as the meeting began with my second supervisor encouraging me to leave the EdD for *"not having the intellectual capacity to pursue doctoral studies".* My second supervisor continued: *"I should be discussing psychoanalytical theories with you right now and you just can't talk about it … It is better if you leave* [the EdD] *now and claim your masters at this point, that way you will end up having two masters"*. My main supervisor constantly nodded away without practically stepping into the conversation.

Refocusing my doctoral research: why enrichment?

Despite the views of my supervisors, I decided to continue with the EdD and reflect further on how to move forward. It was evident to me that I needed to rethink my approach and come up with a brand-new thesis project.

During my professional career as a teacher, I have always been interested in designing, organising and delivering educational enrichment projects whether they did not involve studying to pass an exam or had a direct focus on improving an academic level or a grade at school. The reason why I decided to develop such an approach was to offer a different and fresh alternative to secondary school students, who lived in underprivileged catchment areas in inner London. Another relevant criterion when designing the enrichment projects was to provide access for socio-economically underprivileged students to high-quality educational projects that otherwise would normally be available only in affluent areas in London.

Within the course of three years observing and analysing enrichment projects, I noticed that a significant pattern emerged in my observations and conversations with participating students, members of the SMT and other colleagues. Evidently, there was a major and implicit lack of interest in pursuing any type of enrichment activities. In addition, some colleagues who fell within my remit were also reluctant to collaborate in developing or even delivering the projects. The generalised perception of enrichment activities was negative. There were recurrent instances in which it was common to hear comments that referred to enrichment activities as an addendum that gets in the way of meeting specific targets. Thereafter, I began to realise that there were notable issues with the way enrichment activities were perceived at that specific school. In all, enrichment activities had little or even no value either individually or collectively.

After resigning from my post at that school, for personal reasons, I co-founded an educational company that focuses on providing enrichment classes on Saturdays in an affluent area in central London. The company aims to inspire children to learn

beyond the school curriculum and expand their worldviews by developing problem-solving skills and teamwork from an early age mainly focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics widely known as (STEAM) subjects.

Despite welcoming everyone, it was noticeable that the company was predominantly attracting children coming from upper-middle-class backgrounds. Indeed, upon a thorough analysis of the demographics of the children, it became apparent that over ninety percent of the children attending the enrichment courses also attend top preparatory schools in wealthy areas. This situation made me question why someone whose child attends a £9,000 a term school is still interested in spending more money for their child to attend an enrichment programme on Saturdays. Therefore, I became increasingly interested in exploring parents' motivations and how they perceive enrichment activities. Similarly, I wanted to research what value enrichment activities bring about for children's education and social formation. It also drew my attention to investigating how children perceive being exposed to enrichment activities.

My new role within the company made also raised questions within me about my own professional practice as an educator. Furthermore, I found myself needing to learn rapidly about a much wider set of interests in enrichment activities than I was used to when I worked at a school.

Positioning myself within this research

In reflecting on my theoretical position, I adopt a constructivist approach.
By adopting a constructivist approach, I am asserting that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals (Larochelle et al, 1998). This perspective is particularly relevant when studying human activity (Walliman and Buckler, 2008). As a doctoral researcher, I position myself within a framework that acknowledges human subjectivity and the pivotal role of individuals in interpreting the world through social interactions. This theoretical stance is not just a personal preference but a strategic choice that holds significant implications for my research and its potential impact on the field of education.

The constructivist epistemological stance aligns with the acquisition and construction of knowledge through various developmental stages (Piaget, 1978). Respectively, a constructivist posture enables me to scrutinise and comprehend the importance of social interactions and cultural influences in shaping cognitive and non-cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1980). Further, by adopting a constructivist stance, I recognise the relevance of reflexivity and at the same time, I acknowledge my own subjectivity as a researcher and how my background, professional experience, research process, data collection and interpretation of findings might influence the way the research is conducted. For instance, overseeing an enrichment education company, I can be considered as an insider researcher, given the knowledge and awareness of current issues that I have within the company and the field of enrichment education. This self-awareness and reflection on my epistemological stance help me to consider my biases and assumptions. I outline the assumptions underpinning my constructivist stance in Chapter 3.

In conclusion, as a doctoral researcher, I take a constructive stance, recognising the subjective nature of knowledge, human interaction within socio-cultural systems, and ultimately how individuals make sense of the world around them.

Professional resilience

After refocusing my research interest and after overcoming the difficulties encountered with my previous supervisors, I still consider myself fortunate to have found two academics at the IoE who professionally supported me and re-inspired me to succeed in writing a new proposal. Aside from the afore-mentioned difficulties, I presented a brand-new thesis proposal that embodied a new focus, new theoretical perspectives and a completely different approach. Shortly after obtaining ethical approval to start the data collection, I encountered new difficulties as the establishment where I had arranged to collect my research data withdrew from the research, due to funding issues. Eventually, I managed to find another school willing to host me for the duration of my data collection. However, after arranging dates for data collection, a few days before starting to collect the data the

school decided to withdraw their support due to their stated lack of personnel to support me in organising the interviews with the research participants. Once again, I felt that I needed to start all over again.

Ultimately, I sought permission from my supervisor to conduct my research at the enrichment company I run as I recognised the opportunity to establish my own voice and certainly enhance my understanding of real-life issues surrounding my professional practice.

Summary

Several years after I started my doctoral studies, I am filled with a sense of satisfaction as I feel that I have been able to overcome major obstacles that jeopardised the completion of my studies. In undertaking the EdD programme, I undoubtedly developed my research skills. Equally, I gained a deeper understanding of relevant theoretical frameworks related to my studies.

Most importantly, I now see that my EdD studies have not just been about me trying to achieve a doctoral degree. They have also served as a platform for influencing pedagogy and, perhaps, policy at my workplace.

The concepts that have emerged from this research study, I am convinced, provide new ways of thinking for those educators who are committed to maximising their students' potential through the exploration and implementation of enrichment activities. After obtaining my doctoral degree I am certain that I will continue working hard, trying to improve standards in education and improving my own professional practice despite any potential obstacles I may encounter in any future professional ventures.

Overall, I recognise that my engagement in the EdD course has been a mixture of positive and negative occurrences. Therefore, I am also certain that my experience in my doctoral course can largely be summarised in one word: resilience.

Chapter 1: A study of enrichment activities, children's experiences and feelings, and parents' motivations

1.1 Overview of the thesis

This thesis examines parental motivations to enrichment activities within middle-class families and how children experience and feel being involved in such activities. This study also seeks to further the discussion on the needs of out-of-school learning activities more particularly on enrichment activities. Through this research, I also delve into what motivates parents to engage their children with enrichment activities despite having their children already attending private schools in affluent areas in London.

1.2 Justification of research study

Previous research on enrichment activities

Children involved in enrichment activities have been quite extensively studied, particularly in the United States, mainly focusing on the impact of such programmes on gifted and talented children (Moon et al, 1994; Renzulli and Reis, 1997). Similarly, Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee (2004) studied the perception of parents whose children attended a Saturday Enrichment Programme for gifted and talented children and found that the parents did indeed feel that their children benefited. Other researchers have focused more on the impact of enrichment activities on those from low socio-economic or other disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, Barlow's (2004) comprehensive study on the ability of an enrichment programme to motivate underrepresented communities demonstrates the value of such programmes in increasing the representation of ethnic minorities in science and mathematics.

Subsequently, Vincent and Ball (2007) researched parental strategies for class reproduction and parental motivations for engaging their children in enrichment activities, finding, *inter alia*, that parents want such activities to help their children receive the same advantages that they themselves had received. Equally, Vincent and Maxwell (2016) focus on the concept of concerted cultivation and the usefulness of enrichment activities to help parents secure skills, qualities and networking for their children's future.

Enrichment activities and child development

Other research studies highlight the importance of enrichment activities and their key role in children's development. Ginsburg (2007) emphasise that enrichment activities for children that involve play are essential to development as they contribute to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Ginsburg also portrays the detrimental effects of various factors that reduce play, including a fast-paced lifestyle, changes in families, and an increase in attention to examinations and grading in schools. In all, Ginsburg et al (2007) depict the benefits of child-centred play enrichment activities to foster optimal development in children.

More recent research investigates the effects of enrichment activities such as reading, homework and extra-curricular lessons and their impact on children's cognitive and non-cognitive skills, also considering that children might miss aspects of socialisation and play because of the time they spend attending enrichment activities (Caetano et al, 2024). Likewise, research conducted in Scandinavian countries has addressed the importance of parenting practices and the importance of enrichment activities to secure the nurturing and development of life skills with the potential to increase children's chances of success in future career prospects. The study by Sjödin and Roman (2018) highlight the discussion of social class-based reasoning about extra-curricular activities among Swedish parents. Similarly,

Christensen et al (2014) analysed the association of enrichment activities with cognitive performance and the impact of multi-layered factors that can benefit or disadvantage children's development within the Danish educational context.

Children's experiences and feelings and parental motivations in relation to enrichment activities

As described earlier, enrichment activities have been extensively researched using multiple theoretical frameworks and stances. Nonetheless, research examining children's subjective experiences within out-of-school hours enrichment programmes is notably limited, despite the importance in understanding child well-being (Durlak and Weissberg, 2007), (Larson, 2000). The existing literature appears to prioritise quantitative outcomes whilst many studies primarily focus on parental perspectives, conceivably overlooking emotional and experiential dimensions for children (Larson et al, 2001), Mahoney et al, 2005). This gap in research highlights the need for more in-depth exploration into how children experience and feel when participating in enrichment programmes.

This study contributes to the discussion of enrichment activities from a virtually unexplored stance: children's experiences and feelings when engaged in enrichment activities. In other words, this research seeks to investigate how children perceive and understand enrichment activities and how children feel about being enrolled in these activities. This research also examines parents' motivations to enrol their children in enrichment activities.

There is scope for further research focusing on parental motivations towards enrichment activities. Previous research has focused on class strategies and parental choice using concepts of social closure and social advantage (Ball, 2003). Other studies have sought to scrutinise the part that activities play in parental strategies (e.g. Vincent et al, 2007). In addition, Vincent et al (2015) examined the interaction of social class with parenting priorities and beliefs, emphasising parenting behaviours. Research on parents' motivations, children's experiences and

feelings about enrichment activities and the utility of such activities is still warranted.

1.3 My professional background

During my career as a teacher in comprehensive secondary schools in a socio-economic deprived area in London, I noticed that for many parents, enrichment activities were just an addendum to what their children needed to do to succeed beyond the school. Surprisingly, a growing number of parents, and colleagues, frequently maintained that enrichment activities were unnecessary to pass a national examination. Therefore, enrichment activities seemed not to be a high priority for many parents, children, teachers and other stakeholders at the school.

A few years later, after leaving my teaching career, I joined a company that focuses on enrichment activities. Subsequently, I began to work in affluent areas of inner London. It was noteworthy to observe the prominent significance that most parents, in wealthy areas in London, gave to enrichment activities at any given stage of their children's academic lives. What is more, it was also notable to observe certain patterns of authoritarian parenting that include a high level of negative parenting (e.g. strict rules). At the same time, it was also noteworthy to perceive high levels of positive parenting (e.g. warmth and support). These negative and positive patterns made me increasingly aware that enrichment activities have an untapped potential value for parents and children about their motivations and utility to choose such activities.

1.4 Contextualisation of the study

For about ten years, my work as a secondary school teacher of mathematics and Head of School Improvement involved dealing with exams preparation, so-called intervention programmes and meeting government targets. The focus of the schools' work and many other schools across the country, was mainly centred on

attaining a higher number of children achieving the minimum benchmark, set by the government, to gain a good General Certificate Secondary Education (GCSE).

As I have progressed through my career, I was increasingly becoming aware of the orientation schools were taking about meeting targets and passing exams. I was particularly concerned with many schools' single-mindedness on getting a higher position in league tables and other government performance indicators, attempting to escalate rankings rather than focusing on providing a broader educational experience to children within the education system. Inevitably, schools' approaches to meet government targets were becoming an issue that also began to have an impact on teachers' professional careers and their work-life balance.

This experience made clear to me how little the school and most parents understood the potential of enrichment activities, and how difficult things had now become for underprivileged children – and their parents – to gain access to activities that are readily available to wealthy families. This occurrence also demonstrated to me how complicated the lives of youths are because of the complex blurring of being underprivileged, such as having limited access to resources and other academic and extra-academic means.

Having established an educational organisation that focuses on enrichment activities. It promptly became apparent to me that the courses on offer were attracting wealthy families despite being open to everyone. Parents' constant search for enrichment classes over the weekends, particularly on Saturdays, made me reflect on what triggers their motivation to look for such courses. Parents' actions on their quest for enrichment classes, seemed to portray that there is a potential link between their motivations, their personal goals orientations and their engagement within their social environment with an aim to build their children's social capital that may potentially secure access to a broader range of academic and social of opportunities for their children.

My study is a response to delve into the perceptions and motivations of the goals that parents may have to look for further engagement on enrichment activities. This research also explores the misunderstood and unheard experiences of young children and the reflection of how children experience enrichment activities being taught by an enrichment establishment rather than a school. Equally, my study also examines how enrichment institutions can influence children's learning.

Additionally, I have a particular interest in understanding how parents and young children use opportunities that enrichment courses present to them and what these experiences allow them to build and continuously maintain or change.

1.5 Research Questions

This thesis presents a case study of concerted cultivation: perceptions, approach and utility of enrichment activities in upper-middle-class families. My research questions focus on scrutinising children's experiences and feelings in participating in enrichment activities and what motivates their parents to enrol their children in enrichment programmes. My overarching research questions can be outlined as:

1. How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?

2. What are parents' motivations to engage their children in enrichment activities?

1.6 Motivation for this research study

My motivation to undertake this research came from reflecting on the experiences and feelings children seemed to develop, in my experience, when attending out-of-

school-hours enrichment activities and how these experiences were perceived and dealt with by their parents.

While still being employed as a teacher, in a comprehensive secondary school, I created an educational programme, which included a range of enrichment sessions such as English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, French, Spanish, geography and psychology. The rationale of the programme was to expose children to experience the type of education and learning they would not usually experience at their school. My enthusiasm for enrichment activities and relevant learning theories led me to establish a private organisation in association with a former colleague. The idea of delivering enrichment classes allowing children to discover and explore academic subjects by themselves while being led by specialists, sounded like an extraordinary opportunity to provide children with a different type of education that was perceived by both parents and children as engaging and full of fun.

Another reason that motivated me to conduct this study was to examine the interest that most parents showed to enrol their children in out-of-school hours enrichment programmes. Through informal conversations with parents, I sensed that there was some level of dissatisfaction or perhaps a negative sentiment as it seemed that the educational system was not providing with the essentials to their children. This situation made me question why someone whose child attends a £7,000 - £9,000 a term school is still interested in spending more money for their children to attend an enrichment programme on Saturdays? Consequently, I became interested in understanding, from an academic stance, parents' motivations for enrolling their children on enrichment courses and how their children perceive such enrichment activities. I wanted to investigate how children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities and the impact of these activities on children's development.

In summary, my primary motivation to conduct this study is to comprehend how enrichment activities influence children's social and emotional development and

what motivates parents to encourage their children to attend such programmes. Another motivation is to contribute to existing research by studying children's experiences and feelings in relation to enrichment programmes. Also, by considering and examining parents' motivations to enrol their children in enrichment activities, this study could help us better understand what parents see as the main purpose and key reasons for enrolling their children in out-of-school-hours enrichment programmes.

1.7 Research site and its context

The current research was undertaken at my current workplace. I work in a private company that aims to inspire children to learn beyond the school curriculum and expand their worldviews by developing problem-solving skills, teamwork and resilience from an early age. The company attempts to address the issue of science education and other Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) related subjects being practically 'squeezed out' of schools either because of the mounting pressure on schools to meet government targets or because of the lack of specialised subject leaders and teachers teaching the STEAM subjects at primary education level.

For these reasons, the company offers the following courses: science, robotics & programming and engineering. Courses target children aged 5-14 with all sessions being taught on Saturdays. The rationale behind the courses is to offer an enriching curriculum with an aim to engage children in real-life challenges. While attending, the sessions children are constantly encouraged and led by tutors and mentors to put theory into practice in a fun and engaging way. All tutors and mentors are specialists in their subjects with the ability and pedagogy to teach primary school children.

The maximum number of children per class is thirty. Nevertheless, the company focuses more on the adult-child ratio, which is usually 1:10. Children can join any of

the courses at any time. However, the company strongly encourages parents to sign up their children at the beginning of the school term for just one term. There is a little emphasis on writing as the workshops are focused on hands-on activities and teamwork.

The reason why I decided to conduct my research at my workplace is because of the emphasis the company partakes on delivering enrichment courses. Equally, the company prides itself in specialising in making children think beyond the school curriculum while at the same time focusing on educating children through practical challenges. The ethos the company portrays is undoubtedly contrasting with the relentless target-driven culture of schools. The whole idea of teaching for the real focus of learning rather than 'teaching to the test' seem to be a reliable factor why I decided to conduct my research at this company.

Overall, it appears that the focus of the company where I work on enrichment activities seem to attract parents who are constantly looking for the best learning opportunities for their children. Further, enrichment activities could also be perceived as an added value to children's learning opportunities.

1.8 My expectations for the research study

Primarily, I expect this study to help us to understand how children experience and feel being exposed to out-of-school hours enrichment activities and what motivates parents to enrol their children in out-of-school-hours enrichment programmes. I also expect this study to raise awareness of how parental choices and parenting style behaviours impact on children's lives in relation to a model of social reproduction and the systematic construction of social capital and its implications for society.

By undertaking this research study, I expect this research to help in bridging a gap in the existing literature due to its focus on children's perceptions and feelings

towards enrichment programmes and parents' motivations to enrol their children in out-of-school-hours enrichment programmes, as existing enrichment activities research predominantly focuses on: 1) enrichment activities for gifted and talented children (Chen and Chen, 2020); 2) children's perceptions of enrichment activities (Jensen, 1994); 3) the influence of enrichment activities on children's academic skills (Martin, 2005); 4) developing proficiency in STEM-related subjects and how children can benefit from attending enrichment activities (Tay et al, 2018); and 5) how parents affect the career aspirations of their children (Jungen, 2008).

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters, each providing an understanding and analysis of issues necessary for the research study. Before the first chapter, I present my reflective statement, in which I describe my professional experience, motivations to conduct this study, and stance as a researcher.

In the first chapter, I present a justification to conduct this research study. This includes an overview of previous research on enrichment activities and children's experiences and feelings and parental motivations concerning enrichment programmes. I also present my professional background, the contextualisation of this study, my research questions and my main motivation to conduct this research. Finally, I also share my expectations for this research.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the relevant literature to provide a theoretical background and context within which the current research may be based. I present the concept of concerted cultivation, the definition and types of enrichment activities that are relevant to this study. I also discuss the theoretical underpinning of schooling, the epistemology of enrichment education, Piaget's cognitive development theory, Vygotsky's social theory, the non-cognitive skills framework, attachment theory and Bandura's mediating system and his concept of the triadic reciprocal causation.

In Chapter 3, I introduce and justify the research methodology I adopted for this study. I also discuss some of the different strategies educational researchers use and examine the philosophical issues underpinning educational research. I then discuss the methods of data collection I used in the research study, address ethical considerations, and provide a research protocol that can be followed to ascertain the reliability, credibility, and validity of the research process and its findings.

In Chapter 4, I analyse the data obtained and discuss the results.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I discuss the findings of my research, examine limitations, make recommendations, present my conclusions and conclude with some reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature framework

2.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter by examining the concept of concerted cultivation and the Bourdieuan notion of cultural capital. Subsequently, I scrutinise the conceptualisation of enrichment activities and the type of enrichment activities relevant to this research. Also, I define middle-class families for this study. After that, I consider Durkheim's and Dewey's theoretical underpinning of schooling and the epistemology of enrichment education. I then scrutinise enrichment education's epistemological principles to understand better the goals, methods, and values that inform enrichment programmes.

The theoretical frameworks of Piaget's cognitive developmental theory and Vygotsky's social theory are of value for comprehending how children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities and what motivates their parents to enrol their children in such programmes. Equally, examining the concepts of non-cognitive skills, attachment theory, Bandura's mediating system, and triadic reciprocal causation helps to understand human behaviour and the dynamic interactions between personal, environmental, and behavioural factors.

In the central section of this chapter, I therefore examine Piaget's cognitive developmental theory to examine its utility for comprehending children's participation in enrichment activities. Similarly, I discuss Vygotsky's social theory and Zone of Proximal Development to understand the role of social interaction and the impact of More Knowledgeable Others on scaffolding children's learning when participating in enrichment activities. In considering Vygotsky's theory, I also seek to elucidate the social dynamics within enrichment programmes and how these interactions might influence children's experiences and feelings when exposed to enrichment activities. Finally, I examine the concept of non-cognitive skills, attachment theory, Bandura's mediating system and his triadic reciprocal causation

to provide insights into children's development beyond cognitive domains and social interactions.

2.2 Concerted cultivation, enrichment activities and middle-class families

2.2.1 Concerted cultivation

Annette Lareau (2002) depicts concerted cultivation as "the attempt to foster children's talents through organised leisure activities and extensive reasoning" (p.747). Subsequently, Lareau (2002) describes how concerted cultivation might be linked to social class, sense of entitlement and access to resources.

In developing the significance of concerted cultivation, Lareau argues that working-class families' main priority is to provide the fundamental conditions for their children to grow healthily, therefore superseding leisure and extra-curricular activities that are typically seen as supplementary, and conceivably understood as a superfluity rather than a necessity. In contrast, middle-class parents tend to give a greater significance to leisure and extra-curricular activities. These activities are regularly perceived by middle-class parents as a mean to prolong the transmission of certain social and parenting values that fit different approaches of parenting styles. According to Lareau, concerted cultivation consists of highly organised activities that middle- and upper-class parents engage in with their children, with an aim to foster skills, behaviours and attitudes in their children that would eventually lead to their greater school success compared to working-class and poor children.

Lareau summarises that the concerted cultivation practised by middle- and upper-class parents is a key mechanism by which they begin the transfer of

their social class status to their children, by guaranteeing their children's early school success.

In a more recent study, Carol Vincent et al (2007) argue that concerted cultivation "is part of the process of experimentation of making and finding the child, ensuring that talents and abilities are located and made the most of" (p.1070). For Vincent et al, parents work within a logic that draws on the idea of building their success by providing the necessary resources and furthering opportunities that would enable their children to succeed within their schools and beyond. In this context, middle- and upper-middle-class parents appear to work dynamically in the construction of children's identities in connection with the social, cultural and academic opportunities readily available for their children.

The practice of concerted cultivation, in Vincent and Ball's (2007), expose the individualism embedded in the idea that the child should be able to realise their capabilities or potential to become a self-developing subject. Similarly, Bodovski and Farkas (2008) attempted to support and develop the concept of concerted cultivation by focusing on the perceptions of parental responsibilities towards the child, leisure time activities scheduled for the child, parental relationship with the child's school and the number of children's books at home. For Bodovski and Farkas, the definition of concerted cultivation is cemented in Bourdieu's assumption of the educational system's influence in the reproduction of social inequality. Bourdieu perceived society as being highly stratified by social class, since he viewed cultural capital resources as both scarce and as playing a central role in social competition.

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital sees the education system as the group of institutional or routine mechanisms that foster the conservation of culture inherited from the past. Bourdieu identifies the term 'cultural capital' with individuals who have acquired competence in society's high-

status culture. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital exists in three different forms: 1) in an *embodied* state; for instance, as a long-lasting disposition of the individual's mind and body; 2) in an *objectified* state, when cultural capital is turned into cultural goods such as "pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc." (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243); and 3) in an institutionalised state, when the embodied cultural capital is recognised in the form of, for example, an academic credential. For Bourdieu, the embodied state is the most important. He notes that most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment (Bourdieu, 1986, p.244).

In line with Bourdieu's views, Bodovski's and Farkas' study (2008) conveys that middle- and upper-class parents teach their children those traits and behaviours such as initiative, independence, critical thinking, leadership, communication skills, networking and multitasking that are required for the professional and managerial jobs the parents already hold, and that they aspire to for their children. On the other hand, working class parents are more likely to teach obedience and put less emphasis on creative thinking and entrepreneurial social skills.

In more recent years, a paper published by Carol Vincent and Claire Maxwell (2016) revises the concept of concerted cultivation with a focus on parenting priorities and parental pressures. The authors suggest that concerted cultivation could be defined as "a planned and intentional parenting style" (p.219). Vincent and Maxwell explore some of the peripheral factors that help develop and sustain concerted cultivation by delving into the increasing demand for extra-curricular activities and out-of-school-hours learning. The study elucidates that the need for enrichment activities, as part of concerted cultivation, is not elicited only by social reproduction. Vincent and Maxwell argue that the 'cultivation' of activities by parents is not necessarily associated with social class per se. The element of cultivation is linked to a

specific parental style that is also associated with middle-class parental experiences and shaped by the individual differentiation of the middle classes.

Concerted cultivation can therefore be seen as the intensification of certain parenting styles that focus on constantly fostering and sustaining academic, cultural and social opportunities with the purpose of providing children with further possibilities for success. Furthermore, the creation of such opportunities is characteristically associated with middle- and upper-middle class families due to their relatively easy access to resources and consequent ability to afford extra-curricular activities.

Hogarth (1957) argued that the cultural and economic resources imparted to children vary significantly by social class. In line with Hogarth's argument, the introduction and spread of comprehensive schools can be seen as a more formal attempt to address the lack of opportunities for working-class children. Nevertheless, other researchers, such as Davis (1967) and Hutber (1976), expressed a certain disagreement with the idea of comprehensive schools to bridge the gap between middle-class and working-class families by labelling the attempt as 'the victory of deluded egalitarianism'. More recently, Sally Power and colleagues were critical of the comprehensive school system with regards to the provision of better social, cultural and educational opportunities (Power et al, 2003). According to these authors, the comprehensive school system failed to provide such opportunities, despite political justifications and the introduction of policies that aimed to minimise the differentiation between social classes with regards to access to resources within the same society.

2.2.2 Enrichment activities

Frances et al (2005) state that enrichment activities are experiences inside and outside the classroom that provide opportunities to learn above and beyond what it is usually provided at a particular grade level. Renzulli and Reis (1997) define enrichment as learning activities that are designed to encourage productivity on the part of young people by exposing them to various topics, areas of interest and fields of study and to further train them to apply advanced content and process training skills on areas of interest.

Enrichment activities come about in many ways and configurations and can be delivered as various services to children. Nevertheless, fundamentally, enrichment activities are opportunities to engage children beyond what is routinely available, for instance, beyond what schools typically provide. Enrichment activities therefore provide opportunities for children to extend their learning.

As outlined earlier, according to Renzulli and Reis (1997), there are three primary purposes for enrichment activities:

1) Fostering interest: how children can become interested and explore possibilities to engage with activities related to a specific field of study.

2) Nurturing talent: how children can move to the next level and acquire expertise in the subject they are interested in. How even to foster a passion for the subject and get children to develop their academic potential through enrichment activities. Typically, children learn from professionals who are experts in the area. Therefore, children might benefit from a first-hand opportunity to consolidate their interest in a particular area of study.

3) Increasing attainment: trying to establish and strengthen the link between learning outside the classroom and academic achievement. There is usually a gap between what children can learn in a school setting and what enrichment activities can provide in terms of knowledge. According to Renzulli et al (1997), the gap tends to widen when the school or the school teacher believes that the attainment goal is the only orientation that children should have, consequently, practically eliminating any other type of learning experience for children.

2.2.3 Types of enrichment activities

The types of enrichment activities are very diverse and their provision varies depending on the purpose set by the institution that organises such activities. For instance, many schools organise enrichment activities, also known as extra-curricular activities, with the main purpose of deepening children's knowledge in certain subjects or simply to encourage children to pursue a special interest in areas that might not be part of the school curriculum, such as chess, photography, computer science, or engineering, among many other activities.

In schools, these activities might be planned and delivered by regular members of the teaching staff or exclusively by invited guest speakers who are experts in their fields, whereas other institutions, such as museums, community centres and art centres, among other settings, deliver enrichment activities using local youth and other experts to foster collaboration between members of the community, to learn techniques, develop skills to improve employability prospects or merely to provide members of the community with a space for creativity, to encourage cultural awareness or foster community cohesion (Coltin, 1999).

Tay et al (2018) conceptualised enrichment education as a multi-layered approach whose main objective is to enhance children's learning. For Tay et al (2018), enrichment activities should enable children to explore, discover and apply knowledge. Equally, Tay et al stress the importance of parental perceptions in encouraging children to develop critical thinking and intellectual curiosity. Correspondingly, other existing literature interprets enrichment education as a dynamic approach aimed at expanding children's knowledge. In effect, as Edmonds et al (2022) posit, enrichment education encompasses a variety of activities and approaches that foster the exploration of real-life problems that can help develop critical thinking.

In this study, I see enrichment activities as extra-curricular activities that are part of an out-of-school-hours programme, including activities that are primarily focused on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics subjects that have as the primary objective of enhancing children's learning beyond the school curriculum. In summary, in this study, I focus on enrichment activities that: 1) are not part of a typical school curriculum; 2) are based around science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics; and 3) are delivered out-of-school hours.

2.2.4 Scarcity of enrichment research focusing on children's experiences and feelings

As previously described, there is a notable gap concerning studies researching children's experiences when exposed to enrichment activities. One possible explanation for the scarcity may be a historical focus on quantitative outcomes or a narrow focus on the benefits of enrichment activities. Larson (2001) reiterated the importance of considering children's perspectives and experiences within enrichment programmes to enhance children's overall developmental outcomes.

Similarly, Mahoney et al (2005) highlighted the gap in research that focuses on children's experiential dimensions, especially among socio-economically disadvantaged children. Understanding children's subjective experiences within enrichment programmes can shed light on mechanisms that may inform programme design and implementation.

2.3 Epistemology of enrichment education

As described earlier, enrichment education entails a pedagogical approach that aims to enhance children's learning beyond the school curriculum. In this section, I discuss the epistemology of enrichment education to understand how this approach contributes to knowledge acquisition and child development.

Constructivism and education

Constructivism is built on the premise that "knowledge is always knowledge that a person constructs" (Larochelle et al, 1998. p.7). To some extent, this interpretation of constructivism provides an illustration that knowledge is not generated spontaneously by itself. In effect, knowledge is formed by the combination and subsequent making sense of things according to social, cultural and academic concepts and considerations. In other words, the formation of knowledge is, inevitably, re-interpreted according to ends, postulates and socio-cognitive experiences of each individual.

In contrast, Fosnot (2005) presents a more practical approach by considering constructivism as a theory of knowledge and learning. Fosnot proposes that constructivism does not refer to knowledge as some sort of truth to be followed. On the contrary, Fosnot suggests that constructivism fosters knowledge as emergent, developmental and viable, built up by humans engaged in meaning making in social and cultural communities of discourse.

The constructivist paradigm delineates that knowledge is constructed by individuals through personal experiences and interactions. Essentially, constructivism portrays what 'knowing' is and how one 'comes to know' (Fosnot, 2005). From a constructivist viewpoint, constructivism is not a theory of teaching. Rather, constructivism focuses on the dynamics of how an individual acquires knowledge and how the knowledge is constructed.

In line with this constructivist perspective, the incorporation of hands-on activities, projects, and problem-solving tasks aligns enrichment education with the acquisition of knowledge that is constructed by the individual. However, the debate between enrichment education and conceptual views of cognitive and non-cognitive development still leaves room to explore the impact of enrichment education on child development.

Enrichment activities and child development

The literature concerning enrichment activities linked to child development indicates an interdisciplinary approach, including psychology, sociology and theories of education. For instance, Piaget studied the stages of children's intellectual development (Piaget, 1970), whereas Vygotsky asserted that a child's cognitive development can be guided and mediated by their social interactions (Hausfather, 1996).

Nowadays, many families, schools and educational settings invest time and money to promote extracurricular activities within school hours and out-of-school hours with the primary objective of increasing their children's knowledge beyond the school curriculum and fostering new skills that could ultimately benefit their children. Nonetheless, enrichment activities could also have a detrimental effect. For instance, excessive attendance to enrichment activities might hinder children's

social interaction with other children. Equally, overloading children with such activities might cause mental and physical fatigue (Caetano et al, 2020).

For this study, I began by surveying the theoretical underpinnings of Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories to understand the role of enrichment education in child development.

2.4 What are middle-class families?

According to Maxwell and Aggleton (2015), someone can be categorised as being part of a middle-class family if they have clearly had an upbringing where developing a portfolio of skills and talents was a key concern. Furthermore, Bell (1998) stated that middle-class families have relatively easy access to educational and employment opportunities that can make an impact on society. Lamont (1992) and Pattillo (2013) define middle-class families as those families that have access to a range of academic, social and economic opportunities with a clear aim to maintain a certain status in society.

Nowadays, middle-class families tend to be defined by considering a broader range of categories, such as level of income, professional careers, postcode where they live, type of schools their children attend, and the affordability of certain activities that also provide an element of 'higher' status within society. This means that a focus on skills and talents might not be sufficient to categorise families in a modern context.

2.5 Schooling

Theoretical underpinning of schooling

To better understand enrichment education, it is worth identifying and comprehending fundamental theories of schooling and its purpose within society. As described in the previous chapter, the justification for enrichment education is based on the need to expose children to some form of learning beyond the school curriculum, without the need to sit examinations or be graded.

Theories of schooling are a cornerstone for understanding the dynamics that shape the educational system in a society. Existing literature depicts that over many decades the field of education has been constantly shaped by various theoretical frameworks. Indeed, various researchers have proposed a range of theories of schooling to explore and understand its complexity. Therefore, I examine the most influential theories that have helped to shape an understanding of schooling.

Durkheim and sociological schooling

Emile Durkheim (1956) posited that schools are institutions that contribute to harnessing social integration and order. Durkheim pondered systems of schooling in terms of their relationships to the total social systems in which they are established. Accordingly, Durkheim regarded schooling as the driving force of creativity and cultural construction, by forming a 'new being', through the socialisation aspect of schooling.

As a pioneering sociologist, Durkheim (1956) theorised that schooling did not antagonise society. On the contrary, Durkheim perceived that schooling and society coexist and nurture each other, based on a given sociocultural system. Thus, it is society that shapes and maintains a school system. Nevertheless, Durkheim still attempted to find a justification for schooling and the relationship between social

science and social practice. Therefore, Durkheim also delved into psychology to understand the practicality of schooling through the acquisition of knowledge.

Ultimately, Durkheim wanted to establish the purpose of schooling by looking into how much value, in terms of knowledge and practical applicability, it had for society. Durkheim concluded that any social system has a power structure that includes those who are decision makers and those who execute the decisions; Durkheim also concluded that schooling serves the purpose of a mechanism that has the capacity to contribute to the cohesion and stability of a given community by exerting a powerful influence in the formation of individuals who, at a later stage, can make a valuable contribution to society.

John Dewey and progressivism

John Dewey was a progressive theorist, whose views on schooling had some similarities with those of Durkheim. Dewey (1916) argued that schooling should be a dynamic and participatory process. He maintained that schooling had the purpose of setting directions to individuals within a societal context. However, he argued that for schooling to set directions, the purpose and objectives of schooling must be aligned with the personal interests of individuals, as the ultimate outcome of schooling is to develop individuals within a society.

With this approach, Dewey proposed his progressivism theory, which eventually gained wider acceptance by schools who adopted it to challenge traditional education, characterised by the teacher as an authoritarian figure in control of the classroom and the curriculum. In this traditional understanding, students are obedient and have a more passive role in the classroom. By contrast, progressive schooling encourages cooperation, flexibility and it is project-orientated (Kelleher and Leonall, 2011).

Dewey's progressivism sought to improve education rather than eradicate the traditional approach. Dewey pondered that education can be delivered through action that can help to comprehend and build better life experiences for students. Hence, for progressivism, the primary objective of schooling is to shape better individuals. However, to achieve this primary objective, schooling needed to have a student-centred approach that could empower students to be more proactive in the acquisition of learning. Ultimately, for Dewey, schooling must exercise the power to foster problem-solving skills, critical thinking and the holistic development of individuals.

Bourdieuan understanding of schooling

Bourdieu's work introduced some powerful concepts into social theory. Bourdieuan concepts of capital, social capital, habitus, field, inheritance, cultural transmission, strategies of reproduction and class trajectories are embedded in the modern narrative of the sociology of education (Bodovski et al, 2008). With these concepts and Bourdieu's overall conceptual framework, Bourdieu investigated cultural transmission as a strategic process of family-based intergenerational reproduction. This conceptual framework positioned Bourdieu to challenge the perception of schooling as an instrument for social reform and equality.

To comprehend the impact of Bourdieu's conceptual framework on schooling, it is important to understand Bourdieu's definition of habitus. Habitus in Bourdieu's work refers to a system of embodied dispositions which generate practice in accordance with the structural principles of the social world (Nash, 1990). In his concept of habitus, Bourdieu encapsulates the rules and customs of societies and their similarities. Bourdieu's concept of habitus allows one to understand how individuals perceive norms, values and practices within their society. When interpreting Bourdieu's concept of habitus in relation to schooling, habitus is fundamental for understanding students' attitudes towards education.

Other pertinent Bourdieuan concepts appropriate to apprehending a theoretical justification of schooling are cultural capital and field. For Bourdieu, social capital is the accumulation of social practices and customs through the socialisation that guides individuals' social practices (Tan and Liu, 2022). Bourdieu defines capital as the resources, tools and skills that enable individuals to engage in social interactions, whereas field is defined as the environment where social interactions occur. For Bourdieu, the conceptual interrelation of habitus, capital and field is multifaceted and varies in response to social changes.

In summary, social reproduction occurs when habitus (customs and norms that generate practice), capital (accumulation of social practices and customs through socialisation) and field (where socialisation happens) intersect. From this perspective, schooling appears to be the appropriate field that can empower individuals to construct their social capital and secure the transmission of capital through social reproduction. Nevertheless, Bourdieu pondered that the formal education system is a primary mechanism for the perpetuation of social inequalities as it legitimates the existing social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1997).

2.6 Piaget's cognitive development theory

The focus of Piaget's theory

Piaget's theory of cognitive development looks at the stages of intellectual development in children by focusing on how learning occurs rather than on what influences learning. Piaget's theory argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning as a result of their experiences. In his theory, Piaget introduced the concept of knowledge by assimilation. Fundamentally, Piaget considers that an individual develops knowledge by accommodating and assimilating 'new experiences' into 'old experiences' (Wadsworth, 1996).

Cognitive development

Cognitive theories describe an interaction between the child and the environment in which development occurs as a constant process of active contact between the learner and the environment. An important implication of Piaget's theory is adaptation to the learner's developmental level. According to Piaget, the content of the instruction must be consistent with the developmental level of the learner (Piaget, 1983). From this stance, Piaget's main objective was to understand the underlying reasoning behind a child's answer to a question or attempted solution to a problem rather than trying to find out whether the answer or solution was right or wrong. Piaget theorised that children construct knowledge and constantly organise their ideas about the world based on their interactions with other people and objects (Piaget, 1929).

2.6.1 Piaget's stages of cognitive development

Piaget also theorised that all children experience the world through actions. To that effect, based on his observations, Piaget concluded that all children go through four stages of cognitive development: 1) Sensorimotor; 2) Preoperational; 3) Concrete operational; and 4) Formal operational. Each stage is linked to an age range.

Sensorimotor stage

Piaget held that the Sensorimotor stage lasts from birth to the age of two. Piaget's work depicts that infants start understanding the world in terms of physical actions. During this stage, children move on from innate reflexes and instincts towards a more established set of behaviours. For instance, during the first months of their lives, babies instinctively interact with the world around by using reflexes such as rooting and suckling. These abilities, among other innate abilities, allow the child to experience the world and construct knowledge through their senses and motor movements. What is

more, through trial and error, children can constantly construct knowledge and at the same time build awareness of the world around themselves.

Preoperational stage

In the Preoperational stage, involving children between two and seven years of age, Piaget believes that children can think about things symbolically. For example, they can use symbols to represent words, pictures, people, ideas and so forth. Subsequently, because children can think symbolically, they can construct a world of permanent objects. Correspondingly, even pre-school children can use symbols to represent objects and events. However, at this point, children have not fully developed the ability to think logically (Ciccarelli and Whith, 2012).

Piaget also contemplated the limitations of the Preoperational stage. The first limitation is animism. By animism Piaget means the attributing of life and consciousness to certain inanimate objects. The limitation of animism is the inability to differentiate between animated and inanimate objects. Another limitation of the Preoperational stage is egocentrism. In Piaget's work, egocentrism refers to the inability of the child to differentiate between their own perspective and that of others (Santrock, 2011). While children in this stage of development are egocentric, those in the concrete operational stage (below) become more sociocentric.

Piaget identified two substages that occur in the Preoperational stage. The first is the symbolic function sub-stage (ages two to four) and the second is the intuitive thought sub-stage (ages four to seven). In the symbolic function sub-stage, children develop mental representations of objects around them whereas in the intuitive thought sub-stage, children begin to rely more on logic. Nevertheless, at this sub-stage children still do not have the capacity to explain how they think.

Concrete operational stage

The Concrete operational stage begins around age seven and lasts until approximately age eleven. Piaget theorised that within this stage thinking skills tend to be concrete as children become more logical. In this stage, children still struggle to process and understand abstract ideas.

This stage also involves reversibility and conservation. The concept of reversibility refers to the child's capacity to reverse the order of relationships between mental categories. For example, a child recognises their cat, then the child recognises the cat is a ragdoll breed and deduces that a ragdoll breed is an animal. Piaget maintained that children were able to go from a specific experience to a more general principle through the process of inductive logic. Reversibility is a significant step towards a more type of advanced thinking although it only applies to more concrete situations (Lazarus, 2010).

Within the context of the Concrete operational stage, conservation denotes the child's understanding that when something changes in shape or appearance it is still the same (Franzoi, 2011). A typical example of conservation is the child's ability to understand that half a litre of water is the same amount in a glass as in the jug that is being used to pour it from.

Formal operational stage

In the Formal operational stage, children's thinking becomes much more sophisticated and therefore more advanced; Piaget believed that this stage begins when children are nearly twelve years of age and it continues into adulthood. In general, the reasoning employed at this stage is not necessarily driven by the presence of concrete objects. Consequently, adolescents can think abstract and theoretical concepts and use systematic logic to elaborate answers to problems. Skills such as logical thought,

deductive reasoning and systematic planning develop at this stage (Lazarus, 2010).

According to Piaget, the social context is also important in the Formal operational stage. On reviewing Piaget's work, Lazarus (2010) depicts that significant skills emerge during the Formal operational stage, such as deductive logic, abstract thought, problem-solving and hypothetical-deductive reasoning. In Piaget's theory, the above-mentioned skills play a key role in the structuring and consolidation of this stage.

Piaget believed that deductive logic is necessary during the Formal operational stage because it requires the ability to use a general principle to deduce a particular outcome. Likewise, for Piaget, the skill of abstract thought entails the ability of children to start to cogitate about possible outcomes and consequences of actions, whereas problem-solving encompasses children using trial and error to solve problems. Children at this stage can organise ideas to solve a given a problem while applying hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Piaget posited that this type of reasoning was essential as adolescents become more capable of thinking of the possibility of multiple solutions, using more abstract and hypothetical ideas.

Criticisms of Piaget's cognitive theory and its four stages

Although Piaget's theories have had a strong impact on developmental psychology (Bellin, 1992), and retain influence to this day, they have been widely critiqued. Beilin (1992) argued that the seeming decline of the influence of Piaget's theories began with a questioning of the epistemological stance of his theory. Another criticism is that Piaget's theory is not universal with, for example, there being far more variability as to the ages at which children's thinking develops than Piaget thought. Furthermore, while Piaget produced a considerable amount of empirical data, his methods of data collection and the data themselves lacked the scientific

rigour that would be expected today of an adequate and well-structured scientific study (sample sizes, control of variables, and so forth). As a result, Piaget's data and the conclusions he drew raise issues of reliability, replicability and validity (Smith, 2017).

Another major criticism of Piaget's theory is that he overestimated the ability of adolescents and underestimated the ability of infants (Sutherland, 1992). Most importantly, Piaget did not take into consideration the significance of social interaction in children's developmental stages. Other researchers argued that Piaget's work raised ethical questions because he collected data and drew his conclusions based on the empirical observation of his own children. At the very least, this means that his results cannot be universally applied (Babakr et al, 2019).

One of the major objections raised about Piaget's work was to do with what appears to be the lack of a structured methodology to collect his data. Piaget's justification for his lengthy descriptive analysis of his data was that psychologists tend to over generalise their results by converting qualitative data into mathematical terms. Nevertheless, ultimately, Piaget's lack of inclusion of the social-economic background of children, and the absence of much cultural diversity in his subjects led many developmental psychologists to contend that his findings were weak as life pattern and cultural context play a significant role in cognitive development (Franzoi, 2011).

2.7 Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory adds another layer to the understanding of cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in relation to cognitive development.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework: social constructivism

Vygotsky describes how cognitive development is influenced by the social and cultural interaction of the child within society. With this theory, Vygotsky provides the underpinning of social constructivism and the social basis of cognitive development. Social constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society, and constructs knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999). Social constructivism is typically associated with specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning.

In social constructivism, reality is constructed through human activity. In other words, members of society originate what constitutes the properties of the world. Consequently, for social constructivists, reality does not exist before its social invention (Kukla, 2000). Likewise, within a social constructivist context, knowledge is a human product, socially and culturally constructed. However, knowledge is meaningless if individuals do not build knowledge by interacting with each other within the environment they live in. Furthermore, learning is understood by social constructivists as a social process. Accordingly, learning only occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (McMahon, 1997). In all, in social constructivism individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and the objects in the environment.

Vygotsky's constructivism and education

The constructivism that structures Vygotskyan discussions is founded on the observation of human activity. Vygotsky's constructivism depicts that knowledge is constructed by learners themselves within a specific socio-cultural environment. For Vygotsky, social learning precedes development; nonetheless, the focus is still on the individual. Vygotsky stressed the social organisation of instruction as a fundamental component of schools which enables the inculturation of the individual into the practices of society (Hausfather, 1996).

Vygotsky's approach was characterised by three themes: 1) the best way to understand mind is to look at how it changes; 2) higher mental functions have their origins in social activity; and 3) higher mental functions are mediated by tools and signs.

For Hausfather (1996), Vygotsky deemed that the major way to understand mind is through determining the origins and transformations it has undergone. Vygotsky believed that mind is constantly changing as part of a dialectical relationship, with the world influencing the individual and the individual influencing the world. Vygotsky also contended that the 'process' is the subject of analysis rather the 'product'. He maintained that child development is a complex dialectical process of interaction between the child and its social environment.

In Vygotsky's view, the higher mental functions infer that development involves mental processes initially occurring on the social level, actual relations between humans (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57), and then within the individual. Vygotsky held that the process of internalisation is the transformation of external knowledge as it is reconstructed within the individual. He looked in depth at the role of speech and how speech transitions from external speech through egocentric speech to inner speech.

The mediation of higher mental functions through tools and signs indicates that human activity is defined by the tools and the sign that mediate it. Referring to the example of speech, for Vygotsky, speech comes between the individual and the world. Thenceforth, speech influences the perceptions of the world. In other words, natural perception is affected by the immediacy of speech. Similarly, the immediacy of tools, signs and cultural artifacts influence how an individual perceives and understands the environment around them (Hausfather, 1996).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Central to Vygotsky's theory are the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding and cultural tools. To understand the ZPD, it is also appropriate to consider the definition of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), according to Vygotsky's work. The MKO refers to someone who has better understanding or even higher ability level than the learner in relation to a particular task, process or concept. The notion of the MKO reveals the vital role of social interactions and relationships in cognitive development.

As described earlier, Vygotsky outlines that individuals learn and develop within the social context through interactions with others, in particular with those who are more knowledgeable or have advanced skills. The notion of the MKO is not limited to academic or educational learning, it can also be applied to recreational learning; within the MKO context an older peer is more likely to the more knowledgeable other.

The concept of ZPD is commonly used to explain a child's potential for cognitive development and ability when guided through a task or an activity rather than asked to do it independently (Harland, 2003). For Vygotsky (1978), each individual in any domain has an existing developmental level. Furthermore, each individual has the potential for development within the domain. From this viewpoint, Vygotsky established that the difference between the existing developmental level and the potential of development is what creates the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, the ZPD works when two individuals work on a problem in which one of the individuals is less capable than the other (Vygotsky, 1978). Hausfather (1996) posits that the ZPD can happen in classroom interactions, interactions between a child and their mother, when children play, among children in a classroom or simply when two or more individuals with unequal expertise are completing a task together.

The ZPD also involves the notion of intersubjectivity. In Vygotsky's approach, intersubjectivity is a shared understanding among individuals whose interaction is

based on common interests and assumptions (Rogoff, 1990). The construction of knowledge within the ZPD context is influenced by the intersubjectivity applied by the individuals where individuals share a purpose as the learning within the ZPD involves aspects of shared activity in which individuals are engaged with each other.

Another relevant concept that is linked to the ZPD is scaffolding. Vygotsky defined scaffolding as a method of guided learning that helps an individual learn when guided by a more knowledge or expert individual. For scaffolding to occur, the more knowledgeable individual must also understand the level of the less capable individual and know how to address the level so the less capable individual can be guided accordingly (Rogoff, 1990).

The ZPD can be sub-divided into three stages:

1) Tasks a learner can accomplish without assistance. To clarify, this stage refers to a task that the learner can do independently. However, if the learner can already do a task independently, the MKO will need to increase the level of difficulty to extend learning.

2) Tasks a learner can accomplish only with assistance. In other words, this stage makes direct reference to the ZPD. As previously explained, the learner needs the guidance of someone with more knowledge and expertise for learning to happen.

3) Tasks a learner is unable to accomplish even with assistance. This means that the learner does not have the ability to grasp further knowledge at their existing developmental level. Therefore, the level of difficulty of the given tasks needs to be decreased to match the leaner's skill set.

Vygotsky's work also had its challenges in terms of its reliability and applicability, for instance in a crowded classroom. While the literature generally maintains that Vygotsky's ZPD can be beneficial to help less capable learners, in reality, it can be challenging for the ZPD to work universally. For instance, the ZPD does not take into consideration the possibility that the MKO can misjudge or misunderstand the

individual's ZPD. Similarly, where there are two or more learners with one MKO, Vygotsky's ZPD seems to overlook the various levels of the learners, as individuals come from different backgrounds, and have different perceptions and levels of knowledge. Therefore, if the MKO is unaware of the various levels within a ZPD there is the risk of no further learning or no acquisition of learning whatsoever. Another relevant criticism faced by Vygotsky's theory is the lack of experimental tests. Vygotsky mainly used observations as a method of data collection. Vygotsky's critics also questioned that his theory does not include the slower cognitive growth of an individual as individuals have different needs and grow within their ZPD at different speeds (Harland, 2003).

From a Vygotskyan perspective, the role of the MKO is paramount to the ZPD. The individual guiding the learner might adopt a scaffolding approach to transmit learning. The ultimate objective is that learners within the ZPD gradually become less dependent on the MKO.

2.8 Non-cognitive skills

Defining the constructs of non-cognitive skills

Bowles and Gintis (1976) introduced the concept of non-cognitive skills to focus on factors other than those measured by cognitive test scores. Non-cognitive skills are thus associated with motivations, aptitudes and personality traits rather than academic skills. Furthermore, for Bowles and Gintis (1976), non-cognitive skills play a greater role than do cognitive skills in influencing social behaviour.

Gutman and Schoon (2013) argue that the importance of non-cognitive skills can be challenged. The questioning originates in part from the lack of agreement on the definition of what non-cognitive skills entail. For instance, there is no agreement about how some terms are classified under the definition of non-cognitive skills.

Gutman Schoon (2013) argue that other terms to define non-cognitive skills, such as character skills or soft skills, among others, are also widely used.

The available literature suggests that non-cognitive skills involve a broad range of attributes and competences that are directly linked to academic content knowledge. These skills are considered as 'transferable' skills, with the implication that they are essential for life and for personal development (Farkas, 2003).

2.8.1 The Four Cs framework

The 'Four Cs' model or framework is a contemporary educational framework that underscores the development of Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity among individuals. At the heart of the Four Cs model lies the cultivation of self-definition and particularly critical agency. From the perspective of Jefferson and Anderson (2017), learning in the Four Cs must equip individuals with a purposeful sense of direction and particularly a critical and creative engagement with the world.

Critical thinking

For some researchers, Critical thinking is the foundation of the Four Cs model Jefferson and Anderson (2017), Ennis (1985). Critical thinking is the ability to analyse, assess and summarise and execute information to make decisions and problem-solve complex situations. One of the most influential scholars in critical thinking, Robert Ennis, outlined critical thinking as the process of actively identifying and evaluating information (Ennis, 1985). Ennis defined critical thinking as reasonable reflective thinking that focuses on deciding what to believe or do (Ventista, 2019). Ennis (1985) further elaborated the definition of critical thinking. They contended that critical thinking is reasonable because it is based on reasons which lead to best conclusions and it is reflective for an individual because it examines the

reasonableness of that individual's own thought and the thoughts of other individuals.

Critical thinking skills are sometimes referred as higher order skills. Critical thinking requires judgement, reflection, analysis, synthesis and attention to context (Halpern, 2001). Similarly, Paul and Elder (2008), argued that critical thinking requires clarity, accuracy, breadth, depth, logic and attention to significance. In all, critical thinking is about asking and answering questions that can help an individual to assess the meaning and significance of claims and arguments. The rationale behind a critical thinking approach is to develop the ability to assess evidence, evaluate arguments, reflect and adapt one's thinking to make informed decisions that can help engage in different situations. Critical thinking involves identifying the key points, analysing the sources of information and comparing different types of evidence before making decisions.

Communication

Communication encompasses the ability to articulate ideas, express thoughts clearly and persuasively, both orally and in writing. Blair and Wambach (2020) consider that communication is firmly intertwined with critical thinking. As described earlier, critical thinking engages with analysing, synthetising and evaluating information. Similarly, communication skills convey an analogous process in which analysis, synthesis and assessment of information is paramount to foster effective communication, whereby individuals can engage with intellectual reasoning and enhance their ability for logical argumentation.

Communication within a twenty-first century context, has become far more complex as it requires the ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally and with a variety of digital tools. Nowadays, digital resources and tools represent a brand-new realm of communications interaction in which each tool has a new rhetoric and purpose. These digital

tools and resources also bring about new ways and ideas on learning how to use new communication tools and how to communicate effectively using such resources.

All in all, communication can be understood as any mutual effort between two or more individuals to negotiate meaning in a variety of contexts (Rodriguez Cervantes et al, 2012).

Collaboration

Within the Four Cs framework, collaboration is usually associated with active engagement with other individuals. Jefferson and Anderson (2017) maintain that through the mutuality of true collaboration, the individual can become a fuller individual.

Collaboration entails a commitment to work skilfully with other individuals or with groups. Collaborators are capable of creating effective groups by defining goals, sharing ideas and tasks, sharing power and decision making and engaging in the generation of ideas (Kagle, 2014). Consequently, collaboration embodies the joint effort of individuals to achieve common goals. Equally, collaboration involves cooperative interactions where participants contribute towards meeting common objectives.

Within the twenty-first century skills context, collaboration requires individuals to lead, to work as a team and to adapt. At the same time, collaboration also demands fostering opportunities for critical thinking and communication (Jefferson and Anderson, 2017). Ultimately, collaboration is a skill that develops through social interaction and it represents the idea to interact productively with other colleagues based on mutual respect.

Creativity

The concept of creativity is multidimensional and can have multiple layers that shape its meaning. For example, creativity can be understood through

the lens of individuality, meaning that creativity can be the mental expression of an individual. However, creativity can also be defined within a sociocultural context (Sawyer, 2012).

Modern creativity has its first wave of research in the 1950s; the focus of the research was studying the personality of creators. A few decades later, researchers mainly focused on a cognitive approach, primarily engaging with cognitive psychology and studying the mental processes of individuals involved in a creative process. Next, between the 1980s and 1990s, a sociocultural approach emerged. The sociocultural approach focused on an interdisciplinary style that included sociologists, anthropologists, historians and psychologists, among many others. The interdisciplinary style concentrated on creative systems, for example, groups of people in social and cultural contexts (Sawyer, 2012).

As described earlier, creativity can be defined from an individualist stance. The individualist approach focuses on a single person while the person is engaged in a creation process. For Sawyer (2012) and Kivunja (2015), creativity is the formation of a new idea or the combination of some ideas that is expected to fulfil a specific need. The characteristics of creative results are the novelty, the benefit and value of the outcome. Novelty refers to the idea that the product must be new: the product should be different or it should be innovative. Thereafter, the benefit is related to how creativity is of use in a specific context (Paul and Elder, 2008).

From a sociocultural viewpoint, creativity is conceived of as people working together in social and cultural systems. Thenceforth, socioculturalist study how groups collectively generate innovation (Sawyer, 2012). The sociocultural definition of creativity is analogous to definitions of innovation. Runco (2014) highlights the dynamic nature of collective creativity and its role in adapting to complex and changing circumstances and generating solutions to problems in specific socio-cultural systems.

2.9 Attachment theory: children's feelings

Children's emotional development is a complex and multi-layered process that influences overall wellbeing, social interactions and cognitive functioning (Markus et al, 1991). Feelings play a crucial role in children's daily lives, affecting their experiences, motivations and how they relate to others. In understanding the development of children's feelings, it is vital to examine Bowlby's (1982) work on attachment theory. The significance of attachment theory, for this study, offers insight into the development of feelings, including emotional regulation, social relationships and overall wellbeing.

2.9.1 Attachment theory

Attachment theory focuses on relationships and bonds between individuals. John Bowlby (1982) posited that early experiences with caregivers form the nature of children's subsequent relationships, influencing children's emotional responses, interrelations with others and their overall personal socio-emotional development. According to Bowlby, a good attachment provides a foundation for emotional security, enabling children to explore their environment more confidently and seek caregiver comfort (Ainsworth et al, 1978). Bowlby believed that the first two and a half years of a child's life are critical for the formation of their attachment style. Bowlby (1982) considered that if high quality attachment did not happen during that period, it may be too late for it to develop. Bowlby later extended the timeline to five years.

2.9.2 Manifestations of attachment

Bowlby (1978) developed the phases of attachment to comprehend its characteristics and establish the role that attachment plays in relationships between caregivers and those for whom they are providing care: the phases are Proximity maintenance, Safe heaven, Secure base and Separation distress.

Proximity maintenance

In Bowlby's (1979) view, proximity is the desire to be near the primary caregiver. This phase reflects the infant's desire to maintain physical closeness to the primary caregiver. Bowlby believed infants are biologically inclined to seek proximity with their primary caregiver, usually their mothers. Similarly, Ainsworth (1978) described that in the proximity maintenance phase, infants show proximity-seeking behaviour such as making eye contact, crying for attention, clinging and vocalising. This behaviour aims to harness the attention and comfort of being close to the primary caregiver.

Safe heaven

This phase refers to returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of fear or threat. Bowlby (1982) highlighted that this phase provides children with emotional security. The safe phase enables children to develop a sense of support and protection.

Secure base

According to Bowlby (1982), the attachment figure acts as the starting point from which the child can explore the environment around them. The secure base encompasses the attachment figure (e.g. the mother) serving as a departing point from where children can go and explore and interact with their environment. According to Bowlby, when children can explore and interact with their surroundings, they are at the same time developing autonomy and a stronger sense of independence. Another relevant aspect to this phase is that when children feel insecure or fearful, they can return to the caregiver for comfort.

Separation distress

This phase involves other feelings, such as distress and anxiety. These feelings typically develop in the absence of the primary caregiver. In

Bowlby's (1982) view, the separation from their caregivers elicits a spontaneous response in children that, at the same time, reflects the level of dependency and strength of the bond between the child and the primary caregiver (Ainsworth et al, 1978).

2.9.3 Types of attachment

Attachment theory portrays various types of attachment. Bowlby (1982) conceptualised the different types of attachment to indicate the implications for children's emotional development in relation to their primary caregiver. The types of attachment are: secure attachment, ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment, and disorganised attachment.

Secure attachment

In a secure attachment, children can separate from the primary caregiver. Equally, children return to that person when they are scared or distressed. The return to the primary caregiver also produces positive emotions (e.g. happiness and comfort) because children feel safe and secure when the primary caregiver is with them. A secure attachment also requires involvement from the caregiver. The caregiver must respond appropriately, promptly and consistently to the child's needs to form a secure bond with the child (Bowlby, 1982).

Ambivalent attachment

In this type of attachment, children tend to be wary of strangers. Indeed, children can display dependent behaviour towards the caregiver, becoming highly distressed when separated from the caregiver. Nevertheless, children can display difficulty upon reunion with the caregiver, indicating an insecure attachment characterised by anxiety and uncertainty. In other words, children may not appear comforted when the primary caregiver returns. Lastly, in ambivalent attachment, the caregiver gives little or no response to the distressed child. The caregiver also discourages crying and encourages independence (Ainsworth et al, 1978).

Avoidant attachment

In this attachment, children display minimal distress upon separation from the caregiver (Ainsworth et al, 1978). Equally, there is a reluctance from the child to seek comfort when reunited with the caregiver, and a sense of independence is displayed, suggesting a defensive strategy as a mechanism to cope with little or unresponsive caregiving.

Disorganised attachment

The disorganised attachment is self-explanatory; according to Bowlby (1982), this attachment is characterised by inconsistent and contradictory behaviours. The caregiver tends to display frightening behaviour, intrusiveness and negativity. The disorganised attachment is usually associated with forms of child abuse.

To conclude, Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth et al (1978) depict that early experiences with caregivers support the formation of children's socio-emotional development. Subsequently, attachment influences their feelings, behaviours, and interrelations with others and their surroundings. Attachment, where there is a positive bond (e.g. secure attachment), elicits positive feelings such as joyfulness, confidence, comfort and a sense of security and strength, whereas attachments where there is negative bonding such as a disorganised attachment can produce negative emotions and feelings, for instance, distress, anxiety, fear and a strong sense of insecurity. Securely attached children tend to develop healthy social interactions, empathy, curiosity, and good academic relationships. On the other hand, insecure attachment can foster frustration, sadness, self-doubt and despair.

2.10 Bandura's Mediating System

Central to Bandura's social learning theory is the concept of a mediating system, which refers to cognitive processes that intervene between stimuli and responses.

These cognitive processes include attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Bandura posited that individuals do not merely react to environmental stimuli, but they actively process and interpret information, which fundamentally influences their behaviour. In the context of out-of-school enrichment activities, children's experiences are shaped by their cognitive processes, such as attention to the activities, retention of information and skills learned, ability to reproduce learned behaviours, and motivation to participate. Hence, it is worth to examine Bandura's theory.

In Bandura's work (1999), Attention plays a crucial role in the mediating system as it determines what information individuals perceive and process whereas Retention refers to the ability to store and recall information over time. Reproduction involves translating retained information into action. Children may reproduce learned behaviours and skills in different contexts, demonstrating their understanding and potential mastery. Lastly, Motivation serves as the driving force behind behaviour. Children's and parents' motivations may stem from intrinsic factors such as curiosity, interest, and enjoyment, as well as extrinsic factors such as expectations, peer influence, and rewards.

Triadic Reciprocal Causation

Bandura proposed that behaviour is influenced by the dynamic interplay between personal factors, environmental factors, and behavioural factors. This concept, known as Triadic Reciprocal Causation, suggests that individuals are not passive recipients of environmental influences but actively shape and are shaped by their social environments (Bandura, 1999). Personal factors include cognitive, affective, and biological characteristics that might influence behaviour.
Environmental factors encompass the social and physical contexts in which behaviour occurs. Behavioural factors refer to actions and reactions that constitute behaviour. Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation offers a comprehensive

framework for understanding the complex interactions between children, their parents, and the activity settings.

Personal factors such as children's interests, abilities, and temperament influence their engagement and experiences in enrichment activities. Environmental factors such as the availability of resources, access to opportunities, and social support networks shape children's participation in enrichment activities. Parents play a critical role in creating and facilitating these opportunities by providing financial support, transportation, and encouragement. Behavioural factors such as children's active involvement, persistence, and interactions with other children contribute to their learning and cognitive and non-cognitive development. Through active participation and interaction with peers and instructors, children acquire new skills, knowledge, and perspectives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical perspective I used to approach this research. I explore and justify my chosen theoretical stance. After this, I discuss why a case study contributes to answering my research questions. Then, I restate my research questions to reiterate the perspective of this study. Accordingly, I discuss the research site, sampling, and participants. I describe how I coded and categorised the data and explain why I used categories as themes. In the latter part of the chapter, I discuss the chosen methods for data collection: questionnaires, interviews and field notes. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical reflexivity and validity and reliability considerations of this study.

3.2 Philosophical perspectives

I approached this research from a constructivist viewpoint because I am searching for meanings in the accounts between participants and myself as a researcher. Existing literature suggests that research conducted within the perspective of epistemological constructivism permits ways of conceiving the problem of exploration of knowledge and its association to social and cultural considerations (Larochelle et al, 1998). In this context, I seek to establish a conceptual understanding through multiple social constructions of knowledge with the research participants.

Justification of a constructivist approach

During the early stages of the writing of my research design I considered two possible philosophical approaches that could assist me in having a consistent theoretical argument for this study. These approaches are the positivist and phenomenological approaches.

I began by exploring a positivist approach, given that I anticipated producing data that could be quantified. For example, the number of responses that I could have obtained from the questionnaires given to the research participants. The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research was an important factor in assisting me to decide which philosophical approach I was employing to conduct this study. Correspondingly, the divergence between the quantitative and qualitative approaches also made me reflect on finding an adequate distinction between both approaches that I could purposefully use to justify my epistemological viewpoint and could eventually support me to answer my research questions. I contend that the reason why I chose a constructivist approach was the avoidance of having to create categories to somehow 'quantify' participants' responses. I also pondered that creating categories at this stage in the research could have potentially predisposed aspects of my data analysis.

The second philosophical basis that I considered was a Husserlian phenomenological approach. Husserl proposed that the world of objects and ways in which individuals direct themselves towards, and perceive, those objects is normally understood as a spontaneous or natural standpoint. In other words, according to Husserl, objects exist and exhibit properties regardless of the perceiving subject given that phenomenology is based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events (phenomena) as they are perceived or understood in the human consciousness. Consequently, I contemplated that using the phenomenology approach would raise issues of reliability, validity and generalisability of my research findings. For instance, the use of interviews as a corresponding research method and my existing knowledge as an inside researcher would have conflicted with the Husserlian phenomenological methodology as Husserl's concept of 'bracketing' (e.g. setting aside existing notions or concepts) would have not considered an existing knowledge of the 'phenomena' to be studied. Husserl's approach assumed that I would bracket everything I know about the research participants. According to Husserl, bracketing would enable me to identify the essences and problems of the research participants free of my prior

experiences of being seen as the authority of the place where this study was held by those children and parents who participated in the research.

In brief, bracketing assumes in this specific context, that I needed to completely detach my knowledge of the participants from my personal experience as an inside researcher. I contend that a complete detachment from the existing knowledge about the 'phenomena' (research participants) would have not been realistic before or after the interviews took place. In all, a Husserlian phenomenological approach would have caused issues related to bias.

My professional experience and constructivism

Undoubtedly, my years in the 1990s, as an undergraduate student of philosophy and theology, as a part of my studies in a seminary to become a priest, had a significant impact in my formation in my disposition for social science and a more humanistic approach. The influence of a rigorous seminarian formation deepened my views and even transformed my approach towards my understanding of human development in the context of the social world. The seminarian influence also enabled me to consider how we make meaning of the world around us in relation to the interaction between our ideas, beliefs and own experiences.

From this perspective, and in addition to the justification for why I did not choose another philosophical basis to support my study, I envisaged that a constructivist approach was the most adequate philosophical position for this research. Constructivism engages with the development and construction of knowledge. Larochelle et al (1998) describe how constructivism entails both knowing and how one comes to know. The key idea of constructivism is that what is defined by knowledge does not have and cannot have the purpose of producing representations of an independent reality. On the contrary, knowledge has an adaptive function (Fosnot, 2005).

A constructivist stance is particularly relevant when studying anything to do with human society (Swain, 2017). Hence, a constructivist approach was well suited to this research study given that this is a study that delves into explanations and views about motivations and perceptions of parents and children in choosing to attend enrichment activities out of school hours.

3.3 Chosen strategy: Case study

A definition of case study

For Robson and McCartan (2016), the 'Case' is the situation, the individual, group, institution, the subject or what the researcher is interested in. Ultimately, Robson depicts that "a case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (p.150).

Case studies can be used as a tool for investigating trends and specific situations in many scientific disciplines. According to Swain (2017), case studies appear to offer a "flexible strategy for doing research" (p.174). Equally, Cohen et al (2011) argue that case studies are specific instances that are designed to illustrate a more general principle. For example, a child, a community, a system or a school. Nevertheless, Cohen posits that one of the main concerns with case studies is the lack of boundary lines between the phenomenon and its context. Therefore, case studies can be ambiguous if the subject of study is not appropriately defined within a meaningful context. Furthermore, Cohen et al (2011), suggest there is a blurred line between a phenomenon and the context. Cohen depicts that to minimise the ambiguity of case studies there must be well-defined boundaries of what is studied and its context. For instance, a good approach to lessen the blurring of the study and its context is to provide detailed descriptions between the phenomenon and its background, circumstances and current situation.

The defined characteristics of boundaries separate case studies from other forms of qualitative enquiries. Swain (2017) and Hancock (2016) outline other essential features of case studies such as: 1) particularistic – with a focus on a specific phenomenon; 2) descriptive – an extensive description of the phenomenon studied; 3) heuristic – extension of the knowledge of the phenomenon being studied; and 4) inductive – where data is grounded in the context. From this perspective, Flyvberg (2006) argues that case studies can be usefully described in relation to its type and purpose. Flyvberg also defines that case studies are useful for generating and testing hypotheses. Nevertheless, case studies should not be limited to those activities.

In conclusion, cases studies, in line with Robson's and McCartan's (2016) definition, involve the investigation of a particularly contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence.

Types of case studies

The label 'case study' nowadays is not only used in connection with the study of one case but includes the study of a small number of cases as well. The type of case study can be defined depending on the natural surroundings of the phenomenon to be studied at the start of the research. According to Swanborn (2010), studying the phenomenon within its context does not necessarily mean that the researcher needs to set apart the subject of the study from their normal situations.

In this view, types of case studies can be determined by the 'how' and 'why' of research questions. According to Stake (2005), case studies may be intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The intrinsic case study is generally undertaken because the researcher seeks a better understanding of a particular case. In the intrinsic approach, there is an interest in the individual case narrative because there is a need to know more about a specific phenomenon. Stake (2005) argues that with intrinsic case studies, there is little interest in generalising to other examples or

types of case narratives. The second type of case study, instrumental case studies, deal with a different situation. By contrast, is examined mainly to provide insight to an issue or to re-draw a generalisation. Instrumental case studies aim at generalisation.

Collective case studies compare between several single cases of a phenomenon. The collective approach is an instrumental case study extended to several cases. In effect, one of the main characteristics of the collective case study is that despite dealing with several case narratives and presenting them collectively, each single case study is portrayed with its unique features and context. Swain (2017) ponders that the underlying logic of the collective case studies is replication.

Methodological point of departure

Undoubtedly, as in all research, in doing a case study, my research questions are the point of departure. Swanborn (2010) discusses that in many case studies the researcher starts with a rather broad and perhaps sometimes a still vague question. If little is known about the object, one can pose broad 'what' and 'how' questions. These questions determine the conceptual boundaries of the case.

Discussing the importance of research questions and immediately embarking upon one specific type such as broad or precise questions. I chose to use descriptive research questions. For example, 'what' and 'how' questions. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), and Yin (2009) have identified case study research as a suitable research strategy to adopt when investigating 'how' and 'why' questions in contexts in which the researcher has little control. Accordingly, Yin (2009) suggests that case study research is the preferred strategy for addressing such questions because the researcher, in such situations, is often interested in "operational links which need to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (p.9).

Justification for choosing a case study strategy

I chose a case study as part of my research strategy as I consider that case study research is a useful way to systematically look at a specific case, collect data, analyse and interpret findings within a given context. Besides, its focus is on real situations, with real people in an environment which is often familiar to the researcher and with the view to providing an in-depth account of events occurring within a given context (Swain, 2017).

Conducting a case study for my research was the most appropriate approach for the following reasons: a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009); the emphasis of a case study is to gain a contextual understanding rather than achieving a certain value stance (Anderson, 1998). However, Yin (2009) suggests that the common limitation of case studies is that they are so specialised and specific to their context that their generalisability can sometimes be challenging to justify. Another limitation of using case studies is the issue of defining a bounded system that is objective and purposeful for the research itself (Swain, 2011).

My decision to conduct a case study for this research is based on the following:
I am researching a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.
The unit of analysis of this case study is children and parents because I am delving into what they experience, feel and are motivated when associated with enrichment activities, which, at the same time, are situated within a specific context. Therefore, I want to understand how children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities outside school hours. I also seek to understand parents' motivations to enrol their children in such programmes. Based on this focus, I believe conducting a case study could help me answer my research questions as a case study investigates an occurrence within its environment (Yin, 2009).

Another reason why I used a case study for this research is to gain a valuable contextual understanding of the subject being analysed (Swain, 2017). In other words, a case study provides a valuable approach to this research. It allows me to delve into how children and parents behave, feel, experience and interact within a given context, namely children attending an out-of-school hours enrichment programme.

I reflected on the limitations of case studies; I explored the possibility of choosing action research for my investigation. I considered that action research would have been a promising approach for my study, as action research is broadly considered a way to address issues that occur in a classroom or perhaps in an institution that need to be addressed to improve practice in that specific environment. Action research allows classroom practitioners to investigate, formulate new interventions, and reflect on their current practice. Nevertheless, action research also attracts criticism because it is only sometimes rigorous or systematic enough (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2009). I would have employed the action research approach if I were concerned about the researcher's changing practice and if my study focused on how to run a successful school or educational establishment.

3.5 Research questions

Accordingly, this thesis presents: 'A case study of concerted cultivation: enrichment activities and middle- class families'. My research questions focus on scrutinising children's experience and feelings in participating in enrichment activities and what motivates their parents to enrol their children in out-of-school hours enrichment programmes.

My overarching research questions are:

RQ1. How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?[1]

RQ2. What are parents' motivations to engage their children in enrichment activities?[2]

3.6 Research site

The research site (the company) is a private educational establishment that aims to inspire children to expand their worldviews by developing problem-solving skills and teamwork from an early age. The company attempts to address the issue of science education and other Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) related subjects being practically overlooked either because of the mounting pressure on schools to meet government targets or because of the lack of specialised subject leaders and teachers teaching the STEAM subjects at primary school level.

For these reasons, the company offers the following courses: science, robotics, mechatronics, coding, engineering, arts and mathematics. All courses target children aged 5-14 with all sessions being taught on Saturdays, Sundays and during school holidays. The rationale behind the courses is to offer an enriching curriculum with an aim to engage children in real-life challenges. Children are constantly encouraged and led by tutors and mentors to put theory into practice in a fun and engaging way. All tutors and mentors are academics and specialists in their subjects with the ability and pedagogy to teach children.

The maximum ratio allowed per class is 1:15, that is one adult per fifteen children. Children can join any of the courses at any time. Nonetheless, the company strongly encourages parents to sign up their children at the beginning of the school term for

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[1] RQ1 means Research Question 1.
[2] RQ2 means Research Question 2.

just one term. There is little emphasis in writing as the workshops are focused on hands-on activities and teamwork.

3.7 Research participants

Participants were targeted according to the following criteria: 1) Children attend private or state schools on a full-time basis; 2) Children chose to participate in at least one of the enrichment activities for at least one school term; 3) All children joined any of the enrichment courses in January 2016; 4) Children and parents live in affluent areas with access to better social and academic opportunities.

Another important factor that determined the targeting of the participants was their age. I targeted children who were at least eight years and maximum eleven years of age in January 2016. Targeting children as young as four or five years old would have resulted in issues with regards to their understanding of the questions in the interviews and questionnaires. Also, I considered that younger children would have not been completely able to elaborate their answers when being interviewed or even when selecting their answers in the questionnaires.

The maximum age permitted for a child to be enrolled in one of the enrichment courses, at the time the research was conducted, was eleven years of age. As an exception, one child was twelve years old when I conducted the research. Nevertheless, the child was not invited to participate as they would have not accrued the time required of at least one school term attending any of the enrichment courses. I also considered that having a group of children of similar age provided this study with a relatively homogenous group of participants.

In brief, I invited children and their parents, who were enrolled in any of the enrichment courses in January 2016 to participate in the interviews and questionnaires. I sent a letter to parents to grant their permission for their children to be interviewed and complete a questionnaire. See appendices 1-4.

In total, forty children and their parents were invited to participate in the research. I targeted a sample size of ten children and ten parents for the interviews as I was expecting some of the targeted children and parents to be reluctant to participate or to withdraw from the research.

3.8 Sampling

I argue that the most adequate for sampling method for this study is probability-sampling. According to Cohen et al (2011), in probability sampling there is a possibility that any person will be included in the sample. Thereafter, any sampling plan where is not possible to include any person in the sample results in what is called a 'non-probability sample'.

There are several factors that determined my selection of non-probability sampling for my study. These include the convenience of the accessibility and proximity to the participants, the small-scale of the research and most importantly that with this study I do not seek to make a statistical generalisation to any population beyond the sample surveyed. As soon as I received the parental consent and the overall response from parents, I proceeded to organise the responses in groups. Then, I produced two tables, one for parents (see Table 3.1) and another table for children (see Table 3.2). The rationale behind creating the tables was to have a better understanding of composition of sampling.

Table 3.1 shows the parents selected to participate in the research. The main criteria to select these parents was that their children already attended any of the courses for at least one school term. The age and gender were included for general information only and it did not influence in my decision to select a specific participant.

Table 3.1. Parents' sampling

ID	Gender	Age	Number of terms their child already attended	Course
PR1	Male	40-50	1	Robotics
PR2	Male	35-40	2	Robotics
PR3	Male	40-50	2	Robotics
PR4	Female	35-40	2	Engineering
PR5	Female	35-40	3	Engineering
PR6	Female	40-50	1	Science
PR7	Female	40-50	1	Science
PR8	Female	40-50	3	Science
PR9	Female	40-50	2	Science
PR10	Female	40-50	6	Science

Similarly, Table 3.2 shows the composition of the sample of children. In this case, the decisive factors to be selected were the age of the children, for the above-mentioned reasons, and the number of terms already attended. The rest of the information such as gender of the children and courses were added to the table for general information.

Table 3.2. Children's sampling

ID	Gender	Age	Number of terms already attended	Course
CH1	Male	9	1	Robotics
CH2	Male	8	2	Robotics
CH3	Male	8	2	Robotics
CH4	Male	10	2	Engineering
CH5	Male	11	3	Engineering
CH6	Female	9	1	Science
CH7	Female	9	1	Science
CH8	Female	9	3	Science
CH9	Female	8	2	Science
CH10	Female	9	6	Science

Overall, I sent forty letters. As expected, nearly half of the letters were returned. Thereafter, I proceeded to select the participants according to the age of children and terms for which they were enrolled.

3.9 Codification

What are codes?

Kerlinger (1970) defined coding as the translation of question responses and respondent information into specific categories for analytical purposes. Saldaña (2016) establishes that 'code', in qualitative inquires, is often a word that assigns a summative essence, capturing a portion of language-based or visual data.

The purpose of codes, in this research, is to facilitate the identification of similar information within a given dataset. Codes also enable me to search and retrieve the data in terms of items that hold the same (or very similar) information. Codes can therefore be useful for this study to create an index or categorisation system with an indexed entry that will allow me to organise the content of large texts, such as interview transcripts, long responses from the questionnaires and field notes.

After reflection, I concluded that codes helped me make sense of the data in terms of organisation and systemisation, given the complexity and size of the dataset.

Types of coding

Codes need to be applied consistently to avoid causing errors that can lead to misinterpreting the data. Correct coding of the data would enable me to retrieve, categorise, collate and separate the data. For this reason, I thought that it is important to elucidate the type of coding to be employed in the study. Cohen et al (2011) identify four different types of coding: open coding, analytic coding, axial

coding and selective coding. I discuss these types of codes next, with the aim of determining the purpose of each type.

1) Open coding: often defined as the creation of a new label that the researcher attaches to a given text. The rationale behind open coding is to begin categorising the text. Open codes also contribute to the generation of categories and to defining the characteristics of a category. According to Cohen et al (2011), one of the useful features of open coding is that it can be performed line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence or paragraph-by-paragraph once the codes have been decided and assigned to a text. Subsequently, the researcher groups the codes into categories based on determined criteria. Another distinctive feature is that there must be a clear differentiation between the codes and the categories. Typically, each category is more abstract than the codes that are included within it.

2) Analytic coding: this type of coding differs from open coding as it tends to be less descriptive and more interpretive, perhaps even more explanatory. In other words, analytic codes provide more information about the activity carried out. An analytic code might also derive from the theme or topic of the research or from the literature framework.

3) Axial coding: some researchers tend to associate this type of code with the above-mentioned 'open code'. Axial codes can be depicted as category labels assigned to a group of open codes. For Cohen et al (2011), axial coding interweaves similar or related codes into a larger category that is shared by a group of codes.

4) Selective coding: this type of coding requires a deep understanding of the background of the research. Saldaña (2014) and Braun et al (2013) contend that selective coding involves identifying the instances that the researcher is interested in. In other words, the

researcher purposefully selects certain types of data to create codes that are specific to the research. The main purpose of selective coding is data reduction. For example, in selective coding, it is important to identify a category as a central phenomenon. Thereafter, the researcher constructs and systematically relates any other categories or sub-categories to the main one. In selective coding, once the codes have been ascribed, ordered and grouped, they can be organised into hierarchies.

My first task in organising the data analysis was to develop open codes. After I defined the open codes, I continued to refine and clearly describe the codes within a coding frame. I then determined the type of codes and checked their reliability. My aim, in doing this, was to increase the transparency of the coding frame and to ensure that I consistently applied the same codes to the same passages of text.

How and what to code?

Since it is rarely possible or necessary to analyse all the data collected, inevitably there is a selection process involved. To aid the process of deciding what to code and what to categorise, I purposefully familiarised myself in depth with the data I had collected. For this reason, I chose personally to transcribe the interviews I had conducted instead of seeking to engage with a professional (or automated) transcription service. A related reason why I also decided to get as involved with the data as I could is that a deeper involvement with the dataset would provide me with more elements to define clear and straightforward criteria to inform the creation of codes and categories.

For the above reasons, I considered that the selection process for deciding what to code needed to be systematic, objective and clear, with a well-defined aim to minimise elements of bias without drawing to any premature closure or without making early assumptions. In the end, what I attempted to reach with my approach was to ensure both reliability and validity in the results. Being aware of the existing

literature and the differences and complexities of other researchers' viewpoints, my initial concern was to organise the data in four critical phases.

From this stance, I looked into structuring the data. Therefore, I started to drill into the data as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Phase 1 of data analysis

	Critical phase	Method of data collection	Description of analysis
Phase 1	Familiarisation	Interviews	Transcription of interviews. Revision of interview transcripts. Reading interview transcripts. Gathering initial thoughts regarding content of interview transcripts.
		Questionnaires	Organisation and quantification of responses provided (questions 1-10). Open question. Initial thoughts regarding content of open responses. Initial systemisation of open response categories.

After finalising the transcriptions and organising the data in a more structured manner, I created categories and codes. Next, I proceeded to review the categories I produced (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Phase 2 of data analysis

	Critical phase	Method of data collection	Description of analysis
Phase 2	Category review and Research Question alignment	Interviews	Initial systemisation of interviews into codes in relation to my research questions. Creation and definition of overarching categories. Organisation of codes under each category.
		Questionnaires	Initial organisation and quantification of responses provided (questions 1-10) in relation to my research questions. Creation and definition of codes and classification of codes under overarching categories. Open question. Initial thoughts regarding content of open responses. Initial systemisation of open responses into codes. Creation and definition of overarching categories.

The third and the fourth phases of this process (see Table 3.5) helped to refine the data into codes and categories. These two phases also helped me to check the consistency, reliability and validity of the codes and categories.

Table 3.5. Phases 3 and 4 of data analysis

	Critical phase	Method of data collection	Description of analysis
Phase 3	Application	Interviews	Refining and revisiting the classification of data into codes and categories. Further review of codes to ensure consistency.
		Questionnaires	Refining and revisiting of the classification of data into codes and categories. Further review of codes to ensure consistency.
Phase 4	Reliability check	Interviews	Ensuring codes and categories compatibility and consistency. Further revision to existing codes and categories to ensure a valid analytical pathway.
		Questionnaires	

In all, before proceeding to decide what to code, I needed to create a conceptual tool to enable me to classify, understand and examine the data. Thus, I devised a coding frame to guide the thematic analysis I used for this study. The coding frame contains the full set of codes that I chose to apply to the dataset. It is developed based on both inductive codes, grounded in the content of the data, and more theoretically driven codes, inspired by past research in the area.

3.10 How I coded and categorised the data

Before advancing into the analysis of the data it is useful to recall the criteria that I used to target participants. I, therefore, offer a brief overview of how I designed and implemented the collection of the data used in this research. Subsequently, I detail how I coded and categorised the data, before completing the chapter with a discussion of my own ethical reflections and my own position as an insider researcher.

The design of two rounds of data collection with both children and parents was part of a case study. As I described earlier, a case study approach enabled me to deepen my focus on investigating a specific issue and exploring a particular occurrence within a specific context.

The criteria for collecting the data were as follows: 1) Children attend private or state schools on a full-time basis; 2) Children chose to participate in at least one of the enrichment activities for at least one school term; 3) All children joined one of the enrichment courses in January 2016. If some of the initially contacted children and parents did not want to participate in the research, I was prepared to approach other children and parents.

Systemising the data: organising and preparing codes and categories

Once I finalised both rounds of data collection, I faced the substantial task of organising the data in a way that was clear and helped facilitate analysis and also taking into consideration that categories cannot be created in isolation from other categories. Tesch (1990) argues that the creation of categories involves making decisions about what can or cannot be used. Consequently, during the creation of the categories, I considered that the systematisation of the data was not merely about making the data 'smaller' or even easier to manage. In effect, the categorisation was the result of adequate organisation and interpretation of the data.

The analysis of the data was lengthy and complex and, at times, it was a tedious process. When organising the data, I carried out several readings of the raw data in the two phases, both during the fieldwork and after its completion. This included listening to the interview records, transcribing forty interviews and reading the transcripts while simultaneously listening to the interviews several times. Throughout the process of the data collection, I maintained the two main foci that I initially devised when I planned the data collection: children and parents. Once I

concluded the first round of data collection, I continued to systematise the data according to the above-mentioned strands. For instance, I first worked on all data related to the children's interviews, transcriptions of their interviews, questionnaires and field notes. Subsequently, I progressed to work on all data concerning parents in a very similar manner as I did with the children's data.

I feel that this approach helped me to be organised and more systematic as I handled both sets of data. Likewise, this approach definitely allowed me to develop a methodical segmentation of the data and recognise its valuable significance throughout the analysis.

Coding list and categories

To start the coding list, I employed an approach advocated by Miles et al (1994). Miles et al suggest creating a provisional prime list as a primary point of reference with the aim of constructing a well-defined starting point. The prime list is not be created at random. The list should originate from a source of variables that I bring about as a researcher, such as research questions and problem areas. The prime list was not produced until I finalised both rounds of data collection and the accompanying systematisation.

As described in the previous chapter, the design of this research was based on a case study. I chose a case study as part of my research strategy as I deemed that case study research is a useful way to look systematically at a specific case, collect data and analyse and interpret findings within a given context. Besides, its focus is on real situations, with real people in an environment which is often familiar to the researcher and with the view to providing an in-depth account of events occurring within a given context.

The two strands I used to classify the data (children and parents) were both analysed together. This means that I began the process of coding by looking at the

first and second phases of data collection for both children and parents. In the children's strand, across the interview transcripts, questionnaires and field notes I created and studied nine codes that emerged, or I created through the identification of patterns, similarities and overlaps between the three sources of data collection. Likewise, I identified in the parents' strand 26 codes using the same approach I used to organise children's data. From the two strands collectively, I therefore created 38 codes that were linked to one another. Next, I produced six categories after revisiting and reading several times the interview transcripts, fieldnote summaries and questionnaires. The children's and parents' strands were studied again. I noticed two more overarching categories. I, therefore, settled on eight categories across both strands of data. At this point, all the data I had collected had been perused at least three times.

Thematic analysis and categories

I deliberately chose to use categories as themes. In my data analysis so as to provide consistency and coherence. Employing categories as themes allowed me to use a systematic and structured approach to analyse the data. Also, this approach allowed me to accurately reflect the participants' perspectives, experiences, feelings and motivations in relation to their direct or indirect participation in enrichment activities. Organising the data into meaningful categories directly linked to answering my research questions made the analysis more manageable and more straightforward to interpret the findings. The structured approach helped me contemplate all relevant information to answer my research questions.

How categories, utilised as themes, help answer the research questions

After creating and grouping the codes to answer RQ1 (How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?), I classified the codes into three overarching categories (Identity, Career, and Schooling). Afterwards, I linked each category to each aspect of the

question: experience and feel. Delving deeper, I linked 'Identity' to inform the 'feeling' aspect embodied in my first research question. This deep dive into the codes revealed that 'identity' could help me discern how children 'feel' and examine what positive and negative feelings children develop when exposed to enrichment activities. Similarly, I linked Career and Schooling to the children's experiences. This comprehensive approach allowed me to understand their perceptions when being enrolled in enrichment programmes. For the second research question (What are parents' motivations to engage their children in enrichment activities?), I used the same approach. The in-depth analysis focused on the *motivations* of parents and allowed me to build up a comprehensive understanding of parents' decision-making.

Children's codes and categories

I used the list of codes to generate three categories within the children's strand: Identity, Career and Schooling. The codes under the Identity category are Recognition, Smartness and Status (Figure 3.1). There is one code under the career category (Figure 3.2) and two codes in the Schooling (academic) category (Figure 3.3).

I identified the codes by selecting segments of text using line numbering in the relevant document. I underlined the specific quotation to be coded. During this process, I also eliminated some codes that I initially created as I judged they would not be relevant for answering my research questions and, in addition, sometimes emerged inconsistently in the data. This process of elimination allowed me to focus on the codes that I consider are adequate to be used in the analysis of the data.

Figure 3.1. Children's category: Identity

Smartness

Recognition

Status

Identity
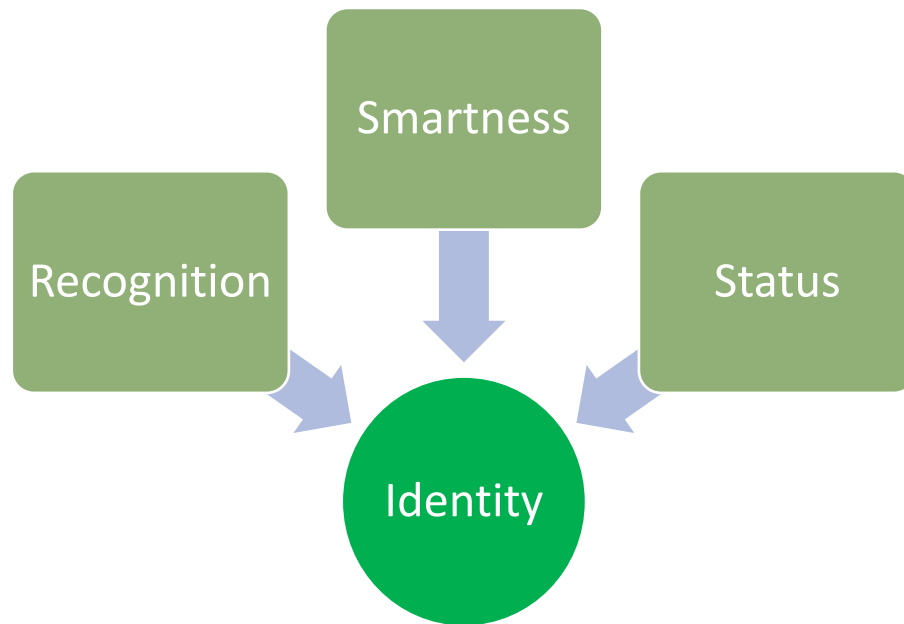
Figure 3.2. Children's category: Career

Aspirations

Career
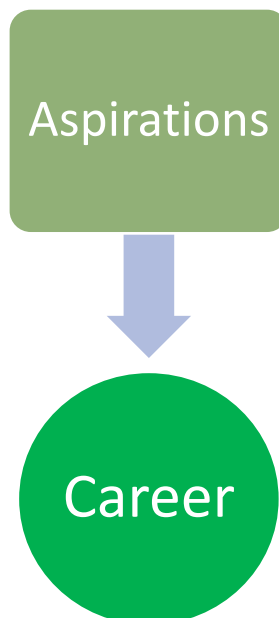
Figure 3.3. Children's category: Schooling
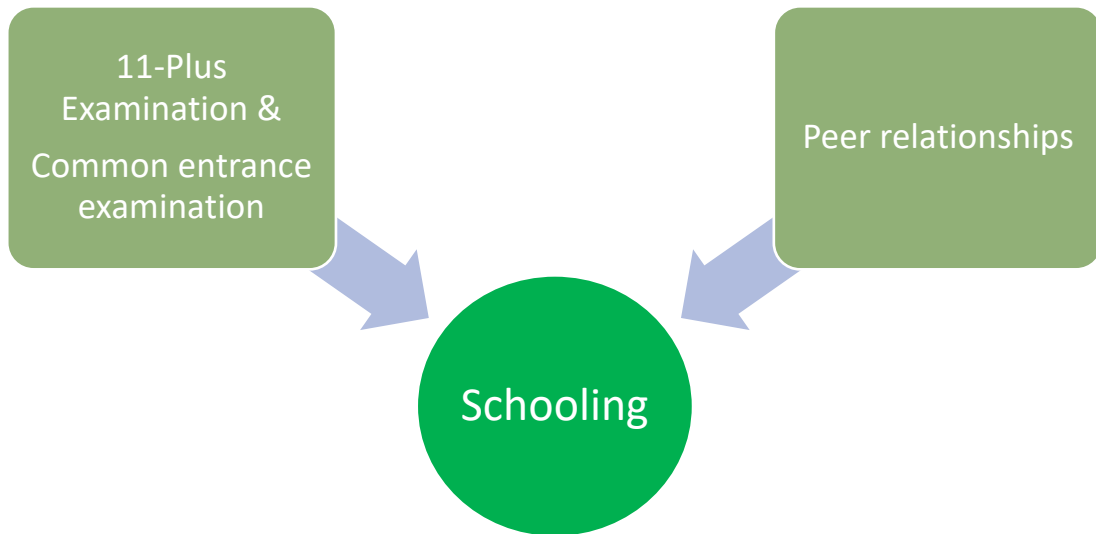
Parents' codes and categories

When organising the data, I considered that the parents' strand was understandably more complex than the children's strand in terms of the identification of patterns and the creation of codes and categories due to the amount of information that parents provided during the data collection. For example, a child's interview typically lasted between 6-8 minutes whereas an interview with a parent usually took around 45-50 minutes. The overall amount of data produced was subsequently denser compared to the children's one.

The prime list for the parents' strand was established to result in three categories: Identity, Family life and Career. I created the list following the same method as described in the children's codes and categories. See Figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.

Figure 3.4. Parents' category: Identity
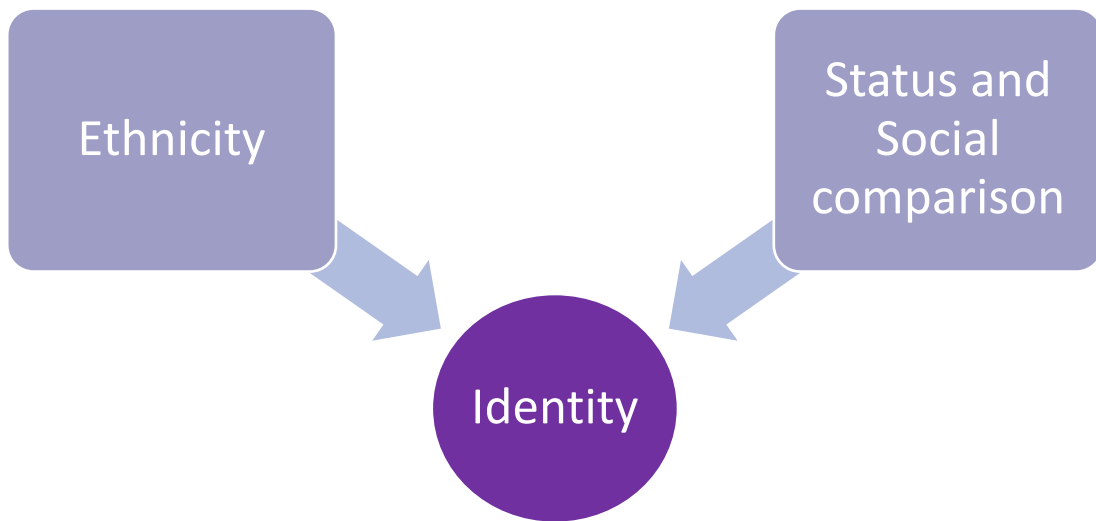
Figure 3.5. Parents' category: family life
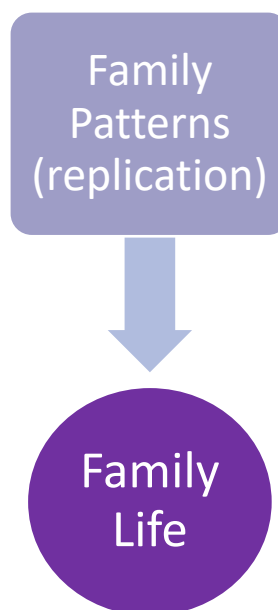
Figure 3.6. Parents' category: Career
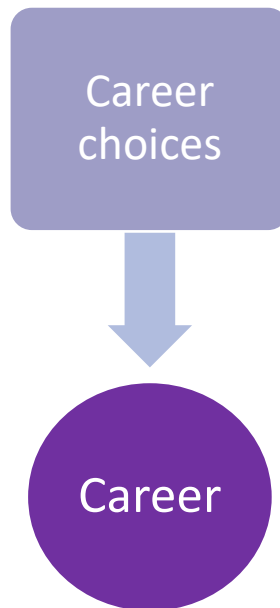
Manual coding vs available technology

Before continuing with the analysis of the data, I consider it is relevant to discuss why I chose to code the data manually even though I normally tend to favour and use computer software for other professional duties and even previous research carried out as part of my academic studies.

Despite vast amounts of software available for researchers for the qualitative analysis of texts, the most popular being NVivo, I decided to code the data manually for two main reasons. The first reason is that I am an 'intermediate level' user of NVivo. I thought that dedicating time to achieve a more proficient level would mean that it would take me substantially longer to start analysing the data. I appreciate that attending additional courses and tutorials on how to use NVivo proficiently would have been of considerable value for my own professional and academic formation. Nevertheless, I believed that I could get to know the software in greater depth later. More importantly, I made the decision to code manually because I

wanted to be deeply involved with the data from every possible perspective. It does take longer manually to code long interview transcripts and then compare these with other sources of data such as responses to open questions in the questionnaires and fieldnotes. However, I made the decision to code manually as I thought that knowing the data inside out would enable me to re-visit excerpts of data knowing exactly where to locate them and being fully aware of the context in which they are situated.

In all, I consider that the experience of coding manually was rather lengthy but at the same time this approach allowed me to accomplish a valuable analysis of the data.

3.11 Categorising the data

The categories I produced are directly linked to answer my research questions,

RQ1: How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?

RQ2: What are parents' motivations to engage their children in enrichment activities?

The analysis of the data was carried out after the identification and organisation of the categories. In effect, the emphasis on the organisation and quantification of responses was put in place with the clear aim of describing and exploring research participants' accounts and perceiving clues that could help me to understand participants' behaviour during the study. In other words, the use of numbers, in this data analysis, is contemplated, employed and interpreted as an approach to noticing patterns and to identify and outline different models of behaviour and attitude. Therefore, there is no overt intention whatsoever to quantify data to craft statistical analysis. On the contrary, I stress that the interpretation of the data was not to be solely based on the number of times certain words or patterns of

behaviour were tallied. Besides, I also considered what I perceived in my interactions with the research participants during the interviews.

Considerations in creating categories

I pondered Robson's (2011) considerations on developing a coding scheme to devise appropriate categories that are significant for my research questions. I was also looking to make the categories straightforward and reliable to use. The main considerations that I considered in creating codes and categories for the analysis were:

Focus: this meant that I centred my attention on carefully selected aspects of what occurred during the interviews and the responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires. The purpose of having a clear focus made it easier to narrow down aspects of the interviews. Realistically, not everything that can be heard in an interview or recorded in field notes is relevant to the research questions.

Objective: this implied avoiding making conjectures before the interviews and observations as recorded in my field notes. Certainly, this was one of the most arduous considerations to maintain because of my position as an insider researcher. Despite this, the checklists I used during the interviews and observations undoubtedly helped me to remain neutral throughout the data-collection process.

Well-defined: codes had to be clear and even self-explanatory, so it was feasible to conclude what situations or comments could be put in a specific code.

Exhaustive and mutually exclusive: codes covered all possibilities and did not overlap, so it was possible to 'sort' situations or comments into specific codes.

The role of coding in qualitative data analysis

Data analysis is perhaps the most challenging and important aspect of qualitative research. Although raw data can be interested to look at, such data do not offer the reader a broad understanding for scrutiny and analysis. Consequently, coding and categorising raw data has a significant role in the analysis. In this context, Basit (2003) describes coding and categorising the data as a crucial step in the data analysis as "it involves subdividing data as well as assigning categories" (p.3). Other researchers consider the process of coding as a fundamental part of the analysis that enables the researcher to produce an adequate systematisation of the data.

I found that the establishment of the codes and categories was a laborious and demanding step towards the interpretation of the data. I equally consider that this step requires a thorough understanding of the raw data in terms of organisation, always bearing in mind that the interpretation of the data needed to be meaningful to a wider audience. Consequently, coding of the raw data does not only take place to reduce the data to make it more manageable. In addition, coding of the raw data involves making the data more useful to enable the creation of categories that can support descriptive reporting and, if possible, theory building at a later stage.

Coding is only a part of analysis. In effect, coding and categorisation help to segment and systematise large portions of raw data. The segmentation of the data is a valuable resource for the management of the data that eventually supports the researcher by informing data analysis.

3.12 Methods of data collection

Justification of methods

As previously described, this study is grounded on a constructivist approach.

The constructivist approach allows for understanding subjective realities and interpreting the meaning of participants' behaviours, experiences and interactions (Robson, 2011). Thus, I decided to undertake a qualitative approach that analyses the environment and research participants' thoughts, perspectives and experiences in a contextually based setting. A qualitative enquiry defines itself as research that produces findings that do not use statistical analysis when deriving conclusions.

Enquiring into qualitative methodologies suggests that research should be conducted employing 'live situations', which implies contextualisation, interviews, observations, analysis, interpretations, understanding of people through in-depth commitment and even wide interaction with all participants (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This means that associated methods, in particular interviews and observations, are dominant in qualitative methodology.

Despite the type of methodology used to conduct this study, the fundamental aspect of the investigation should be its credibility and trustworthiness which can be nurtured by the transparency, objectivity and authenticity of the study.

3.13 Questionnaires

Using a questionnaire for this research study was based on the principle that it gives all participants access to the same standardised questions. A questionnaire makes it easier for researchers to identify trends in the responses given (Munn et al, 1999). Using a questionnaire also meant that respondents could complete the questionnaire in their own time. Furthermore, questionnaires are often associated with the quest for objectivity.

Questionnaires are a significant instrument for collecting data, as they provide a clear purpose, structure, and generate numerical data. Questionnaires can also help to collect non-quantitative data through open-ended questions. Within this investigation, I decided to distribute questionnaires to produce

reliable information, which can help some participants be more open when producing their answers. For this small-scale study, I chose to use questionnaire due to the qualitative nature of this investigation. I endeavoured to provide the respondents with a clear opportunity to deliver their answers the way they thought was best. The questionnaires, as shown in Appendix 8, were only given to children.

To effectively address the research questions, I focused on asking questions that could help me capture how children experience and feel being exposed to out-of-school-hours programmes. Therefore, I conceived two lines of inquiry directly linked to my research questions: how children 'experience' and 'feel'; and what parents' 'motivations' are.

Under the '*how children experience and feel*?' aspect of the question, I gathered data on three issues (perceptions, motivations, feelings). I framed the dependent variable of the questionnaires as the three sub-topics (perceptions, motivations and feelings) because these sub-topics depend on or are influenced by another factor, 'being enrolled' in an out-of-school hours programme. After that, I outlined the independent variable, considering factors such as children's background, education level, and age that might affect the dependent variable. This approach is essential to the design of the questionnaire because it ensures the study covers a range of relevant variables to help me answer my research question. Equally, I believe this approach helps to identify and exclude any irrelevant variables for this research.

After defining the dependent and independent variables, I differentiated the questionnaire into two sections: 1) an initial section that presented short questions in a child-friendly manner to ensure that the respondent can select the option that best suits their answer; 2) a latter section that consisted of two open-ended questions to allow the respondents to express their opinions openly and free of restrictions by options. To provide consistency in the data

analysis, I coded the data produced from the open questions and matched the codes under each category.

The data collection through questionnaires took place in January 2016. Children were asked to complete the questionnaires in a designated seminar room set up for the purpose. This approach helped to ensure a high level of response from the participants. Children were invited to complete the questionnaire anonymously and independently. They were reminded that they could withdraw from the research at any time. In total, I administered twenty questionnaires to children. I distributed ten questionnaires in the first round of data collection and ten questionnaires in the second round.

3.14 Interviews

In addition to the questionnaires, I selected interviews as a complementary method of data collection. I used questionnaires and interviews in combination to have a wider breadth of understanding of the subject I focused on this study.

Interviews are potentially very rich sources of data that can also supply a greater possibility of further exploration 'on the spot' as the interviewer can demand more information if needed or perhaps further clarification on certain questions. Interviews also provide a sense of 'humanity' as there is usually 'face-to-face' contact that is likely to move research away from a mere manipulation of numbers to conversations, as interviews are generated by humans to be performed by humans (Cohen et al, 2011). I therefore adopted a semi-structured approach for conducting interviews as this allowed me to ask follow-up questions in situations where further clarification was needed from the participants. Adopting this method of interviewing also allowed me to delve into and establish the participants' understanding of key terms needed for the research and to access their knowledge about the issues being examined (Denscombe, 1998) in a relatively open situation devoid of the tensions which can be associated with a more rigid approach.

A significant value of semi-structured interviews is that these are considered to provide a systematic approach to data collection. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to respond a specific theme or respond further (Hitchcock et al, 1989). Interviews are not ordinary conversations that can be held in any place at any time. Interviews are meant to have a purpose that helps enrich the subject of research that impels to answer the key queries of the investigation. This is one of the reasons why interviews are usually question-based as they seek to elicit what is relevant to the study in progress. Therefore, as a researcher, I designed an interview that has a clear rationale of exploration aiming to gather data from participants' experiences that may substantially contribute to draw some relevant conclusions.

Having looked at the wide typed range of interviews, I decided to employ semi-structured interviews as they tend to be slightly more flexible than structured ones and because they tend to be favoured by educational researchers, in the sense that they allow a "sense of depth in the interviewee's responses" (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989, p.83). Semi-structured interviews noticeably have a well-defined set of questions which have been previously thought with a purpose but these questions tend to be opened leaving a broad margin for spontaneous responses, moreover, to generate questions to help maximise the usefulness of the interview. I was keen to use interviews to allow the voice of my interviewees to be heard by me.

When designing the interview questions for children and parents, I used a similar approach as described in the section on questionnaires. For the children's interviews, I used the same dependent and independent variables underpinning the questionnaires. Next, I carefully designed the interview questions. For the parents' interview questions, I focused on one subject: motivations. Again, I used the same approach as described in the questionnaires section. Consequently, I explored three issues (expectations, socioeconomic status, and academic value). Next, I outlined the dependent variable (parents' motivations) and the independent variables in line with the above-mentioned issues. For the parents' interview questions, I took the

approach of asking much the same questions as I had in the children's interviews, using different words to cross-check parents' answers.

Finally, I embarked on individual, face-to-face interviews in the initial stage of data collection with both children and parents. I interviewed ten children (see interview questions in appendix 5) and ten parents separately (see interview questions in appendix 6). I conducted two rounds of interviews with the same participants. The first round of interviews was conducted in early January 2016, followed by the second round in April 2016. A typical interview with a child spanned 6-8minutes, while interviews with parents typically lasted 45-50 minutes (see appendix 7). All interviews were conducted in a dedicated meeting room. As described earlier, I chose to transcribe the interviews to be fully familiarised with the data.

3.15 Field notes

Emmerson et al (2011) describe field notes as a tool to record observations and insights when conducting research systematically. Similarly, Muswazi and Nhamo (2013) define field notes as putting materials in a form that can be recalled in the future. The notes can result from speeches, lectures, conversations, observations, and reading references. Field notes are unique to the researcher and can help understand a situation, context, or specific occurrence and enable researchers to capture additional information relevant to the study.

Gall et al (1996) indicate that field notes have advantages and disadvantages. They outline some practical benefits, such as helping to reconstruct dialogues, explaining situations, and providing descriptions that can be captured when interacting with the participants. These benefits highlight the practicality and usefulness of field notes in social sciences research.

As part of my data collection, I recorded field notes while the children attended the enrichment classes on weekends during the first and the second rounds of data

collection. I jotted down my observations by hand immediately after they occurred and I transcribed my notes using a word processor. Despite aiming to write down my notes immediately to reconstruct my conversations with the research participants, I acknowledge that occasionally, I was unable to remember each word mentioned by each participant. Nevertheless, I still paid special attention to reconstruct my conversations and observations with a high level of accuracy, so that my field notes were very close to what participants said or how they behaved.

I made my field notes after conversations and interactions with children and parents who participated in this study. The conversations with parents happened spontaneously, mostly at registration and dismissal time, whereas conversations with children occurred during or between sessions, for instance, at break time. After transcribing and organising the field notes, I systematised and coded the data collected, following the same steps explained for the interviews and open-ended questionnaire questions. Firstly, I established the independent and dependent variables. Then, I proceeded to match the data with the respective categories. I selected from my extensive filed notes those that were most relevant to the overall aims of my study.

In summary, field notes provided me with an additional lens to identify patterns that helped me correlate and compare the data from the questionnaires and interviews. Besides, field notes permitted me to gain a greater understanding of the participants by looking at 'what they said' or 'how they behaved' in a specific, non-interview context. This insight helped me to think more critically and engage with the data more deeply.

3.16 Ethical considerations

There were several ethical considerations, associated to the issue of research with young children, which relate to inform consent, interviews and questionnaires. To facilitate ethically sensitive research several factors were considered such as the

age of those being researched, whether the researched area is a sensitive area, whether the aims of the research were seen as subversive.

1. I did not teach any of the children who were involved in this study. Therefore, all children were formally invited in writing, through a letter sent to their parents or legal carers, to participate in the research. I obtained parental permission for each child involved in the research.

2. There was a relatively small impact of power relations, in terms of me as a researcher, considering that I do not teach any of the children at the research site. Nevertheless, I am involved in the organisation of the courses, the recruiting of tutors and because I liaise with parents from a public relations point of view. I am aware that most children would perceive me as a figure of authority within the establishment.

3. Children and parents were not coerced into answering questions either on questionnaires or during the individual face-to-face interviews.

4. The involvement of the participants was voluntary and this was explained to the parents in writing through the initial invitation letter. It was made clear to all participants that they could withdraw from the research at any point. Also, participants were told that their non-participation in the research would not be held against them (e.g. it would not be put on their record held by the company).

5. I also guaranteed research participants anonymity. Neither children nor parents were identified. All participants were reassured that their own individual participation would remain anonymous.

6. Research participants were reminded that they should disclose only as much information as they wished to and felt was appropriate.

7. The data collected was kept in a secure place away from the research site.

8. Participants were assured of confidentiality about what was said during the collection of the data.

9. Protocols were developed in line with the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidelines and the policies of University College London Institute of Education.

3.17 Ensuring validity and reliability

Reliability

The term reliability is often linked to quantitative research for the sake of its positivist approach, as quantitative research embraces the notion of testing, checking and trialling. In contrast, qualitative investigation may also involve testing, but with a slightly different focus. In qualitative research the testing is subject to interpretation and further reflection which may enable the researcher to elucidate a fact that needs further clarification through a more conscious analysis with a purpose of explanation to generate understanding (Golafshani, 2003).

In this study, the concept of reliability focuses on a given group (parents and children attending enrichment courses out of school hours, more specifically on Saturdays), within a certain time of the academic year (spring term, from January to April 2016). Therefore, to replicate similar results with different performers and circumstances would be virtually impossible.

Validity and ecological validity

Validity, per se, is challenging to define as a single concept within the qualitative research context. Due to the massive multiplicity of criteria to define the term, researchers have developed the notion of validity, adapting the term to what they consider to be more appropriate for the research (Golafshani, 2003). Nonetheless, Stenbacka (2001) argues that the concept of validity should be redefined for qualitative researchers. Other researchers suggest that "internal validity" proposes a sense of "strength" to qualitative investigations "as this method assumes that there are multiple, changing realities and that individuals have their own constructions of reality" (Butler, 2009, p.26).

Due to the multiple perceptions of validity this research was focused on the notion of internal validity, as a sort of conceptual reference rather than a dogmatic concept, as this can potentially offer a kind of theoretical and practical support to the researcher.

Ecological validity

I considered ecological validity to survey the potential generalisation of this study. Baumann (2006) contends that educational researchers generalise findings conducted in highly controlled environments and apply those findings in real-life educational settings. In addition, Baumann depicts that conducting research in controlled environments does not necessarily replicate in real-life settings, which might lead to erroneous educational recommendations.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I start by presenting arguments for my strategy for analysing the data. Thereafter, I outline how I grouped codes into categories. Then, I proceed to analyse and discuss the data I collected for children and parents in line with my research questions. I conclude the chapter with an in-depth discussion of the key findings that emerged from the analysis of questionnaires, interviews and field notes.

4.2 Strategy used to analyse the data

Justification for using thematic analysis as opposed to content analysis

I chose thematic analysis to analyse the data collected because it pays particular attention to the qualitative aspects of the material being analysed. This method, as Fereday et al (2006) suggest, is particularly suited for the interpretation of social phenomena, shedding light on the multiple social constructions of knowledge elicited from research participants. Similarly, other researchers maintain that thematic analysis is a useful tool with which to analyse the process of social construction, in the sense that it can help to identify how a particular social representation develops (Lupton, 1999; Joffe, 2004).

From a constructivist epistemological stance, I can search in-depth for meanings in the accounts between participants and myself as a researcher. Therefore, thematic analysis helps me address the central inquiries of this research, namely the two qualitative research questions of the study. The systematisation of the data in codes, a key feature of thematic analysis, significantly aids in identifying recurring

themes and patterns that emerge from the data on children's experiences and accounts of their feelings when exposed to enrichment activities. This, in turn, enhances our understanding of the complexity and variability of parents' motivations to enrol their children in out-of-school-hours enrichment programmes.

By contrast, I deem content analysis a useful technique for discovering and describing the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention. Equally, content analysis has several attractions for examining trends and patterns in documents, defining the units of analysis, identifying relevant passages in the text, and contributing to data reduction. However, content analysis tends to be most useful for research that focuses on numerical descriptions of features of a given text or even a series of images (Krippendorff, 1980).

In conclusion, thematic analysis facilitates a comprehensive examination of the data. I determined that thematic analysis would be more suitable for answering the two research questions of this study as it offers a systematic, clear and structured way to produce meanings from the sorts of data collected.

4.3 Analysis of children's data

In this section I focus on an in-depth examination of the children's interviews, questionnaires and field notes data. I also provide an explanation and analysis of the data contained within the codes and categories. By offering an analysis of the ways in which children describe, think, feel and perceive themselves, I believe I that I can present an accurate approximation of how they experience and feel being exposed to out-of-school-hours enrichment activities.

Grouping of codes and categories for children

The codes and categories for the data gathered about the children tend to reflect how they approached and perceived themselves within a particular environment and situation while attending the enrichment courses they have been enrolled for. I identified six codes that emerged from the three different sources that I used for the research (interviews, questionnaires and field notes). Then, I named and grouped the categories that emerged from the children's data. See Table 4.1.

There was no intention to quantify data for statistical analysis. The interpretation of the data was not based solely on the number of times certain words or patterns of behaviour were tallied. Rather, I also considered what I have perceived in my interactions with the research participants during the interviews and while observing them. Table 4.1 shows the codes and categories derived from the children's data.

Table 4.1. Overview of children's codes and categories

	Codes	Category
Children	Recognition	Identity
	Smartness	
	Status	
	Aspirations	Career
	11-Plus exam/Common Entrance exam	Schooling
	Peer relationships	

Recognition and Identity

The notion of 'identity' is a relatively recent social construct. Even though it appears that everyone knows how to use the word in everyday discourse, it proves difficult

to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its meanings.

Fearon (1999) always refers to identity as "the 'sameness of a person or thing' or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality" (p.3). In this study, I define identity as the self-characteristics or attributes constructed within a social and cultural context. By extension, identity can also be defined as the awareness of 'individuality' and 'otherness'. I deem that identity can also signify the names and influence given to oneself by others, how we perceive ourselves and how we are perceived by others.

Children's perception and construction of identity appears to be more apparent when children interact with each other. During the data collection, the notion of identity seems to emerge from the conscious desire of attempting 'to be the best'. For instance, during an interview Joshua expressed:

> … I'm here because I know that I'm the
> best. I already know the concepts that I'll
> be taught today. I even know what the
> [science][3] session is about. I don't have to
> be taught about a dissection of a fish
> because I already know what is inside a fish
> …[4]
>
>   (Joshua, interview)

In this case, Joshua appeared to be exceptionally confident about his knowledge. From the field notes, it also emerged that Joshua was overtly confident and most of the time attempting to dominate his group or classmates throughout most of the sessions. Joshua seemed to have a clear idea of who he was. However, Joshua did not appear to fully understand the significance of 'being there' since he believed

---

[3] I use square brackets to aid clarity in the participants' accounts.
[4] '…' indicates that I provide only an extract of an interview or an excerpt of a whole text.

that he already knew the content to be taught during the course or individual sessions. Joshua felt that his superlative attribute was that he was the best of his group.

Another child, however, appeared to have developed her sense of identity in a different fashion:

> … I want to get the highest certificate
> [award] that you have here in the
> Saturday school …
>
> (Sarah, interview)

I, therefore, asked:

> Why are you aspiring to get the highest
> certificate?

Sarah replied:

> … because that makes me feel happy
> and my parents will be happy too. My
> friends will also see that I'm the best …
>
> (Sarah, interview)

With this quotation, Sarah shows that she values her parents' recognition for '*being the best*' as she seeks to make them happier by getting the highest award for attending the weekend course she was enrolled for. At the same time, Sarah gives a straightforward hint of the awareness of 'otherness' by attempting to differentiate or even distance herself from the rest of their friends by being the best or being

recognised for being the best within her group of friends. This stance provides an insight into the way Sarah formed her identity and the links established by her family, friends, school and general social interaction to manage to situate herself within a given social and cultural context.

In line with Joshua's and Sarah's accounts (being the best and being acknowledged by others as the best), it is noteworthy that when examining the data of the questionnaires, in particular, the question linked to status ("*Do you think your Saturday class helped you to do better at school*?"), in the first round of questionnaires, sixty per cent of the children answered 'Strongly agree', whereas thirty per cent answered 'Maybe' and ten per cent 'Disagree'. However, in the second round of questionnaires, the children overall were more positive about the enrichment activities with seventy per cent answering, 'Strongly agree' and twenty per cent answering 'Agree'. In other words, ninety percent of the children were positive about how they perceived that enrichment activities helped them to be better at their school.

The perception of being 'better at school' could be related to how children experience being exposed to enrichment programmes. When interpreting the questionnaire responses, there appears to be a sense of positivity and identity. As discussed in Chapter 2, Vygotsky's theory of social learning provides a robust framework to justify how children construct their identities through social interactions. Predominantly, children appear to be aware of the 'self'. However, children also construe their identities about the 'other'.

According to Vygotsky (1978), children also internalise, learn and understand cultures, values, norms, behaviours and beliefs through sociocultural mediation, as, for Vygotsky, the process of sociocultural mediation plays a pivotal role in the construction of identity. The use of language and understanding of the social context supports the internalisation of certain attitudes and roles as children use language to communicate with others but also use language to facilitate the construction of who they are in direct reference to others. This robust theoretical

framework of Vygotsky's theory underpins my research, providing a comprehensive understanding of the construction of identity through sociocultural mediation.

In the next excerpt, there is another helpful insight that shows a necessity of being recognised. Nevertheless, the child appears to be humbler or perhaps more aware of the significance of the recognition and what this could bring about to shape his identity. Oscar said:

> I come to [the] robotics [session]
> because I like it. It's fun to see it [the
> robot] moving. I feel good when I get it
> moving. I want to be a robot
> programmer because I want everyone to
> know that I'm good at what I do …

(Oscar, interview)

In Oscar's quotation, there is an indication of contentment for the task being carried out, but, at the same time, there is a sense of shifting from 'feeling great' at what he does towards a greater understanding of recognition from "everyone". There is also a sense of needing to make his social circle aware of his actions. Accordingly, Oscar's approach feeds a view of a deeper connection between his sense of achievement and the excitement of being recognised for being good at what he does or could potentially do.

I also noted that Oscar's comments directly link how he feels and his exposure to and participation in a robotics task. When scrutinising Oscar's remarks against the research question "How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?", Oscar's experience is positive because he feels joyful that he programmed the robot and it worked. This happiness can result from a sense of satisfaction because of Oscar's progress in programming the robot. At the same time, Oscar looks for recognition among his peers.

In theory, Oscar's feelings of happiness and search for recognition could be an isolated case. Nonetheless, when examining the data collected from the second questionnaire, specifically responses to the question, *"Do you think your Saturday class helped you to do better at school?"*, the vast majority, ninety per cent, said 'Yes'. Besides, when identifying frequently used words in the analysis of the responses to the open-ended question: *"Did the Saturday class help you learn any skills? For example, do you have problem-solving skills, teamwork, or resilience? Explain your answer."*, common responses included the terms 'reward' and 'recognition'. Perhaps children at this stage understand reward and recognition as the outcome to be received after making an effort beyond expectations, improving, being good (at something) and achieving.

Ciara also seeks to look for recognition but from a different audience. Ciara wants to be recognised as the best in the class by her peers rather than looking to be recognised by her parents.

Ciara said:

> I want my class to know that I'm better
> than anyone else. I come to this [science
> session] because I want to know more
> than my friends before we go back to
> school …
>
> (Ciara, interview)

In this instance, Ciara showed that she was clear about the purpose of attending her Saturday science sessions. In effect, Ciara clearly demonstrated that she wanted to be the best, perhaps not for self-complacency per se but possibly for the needs of being seen and recognised as a top of the class student in her science lessons.

Children were normally inclined to be positive, optimistic and hopeful. This might be because they already have a solid experience of achievement and attainment at their schools and perhaps within their social circle. I deduce that children were fully aware of the sense of recognition as they are conscious of how to succeed. Equally, children showed that they were willing to share their experience of achievement and success with anyone.

Returning to the literature framework, focusing on Vygotsky's theory, he emphasises the role of social interactions in shaping children's understanding of rewards and recognition. As described in Chapter 2, Vygotsky (1978) recognises that children learn from social interactions, and it is through constant interaction with others that children build their sense of recognition and affirmation based on awareness of self-worth and validation from other individuals. On the other hand, Piaget's cognitive theory, which focuses on developmental stages, suggests that children in the preoperational stage start developing and making sense of the world around them. However, when children enter the concrete operational stage, they might perceive recognition and develop an understanding of recognition, award and affirmation, as, in this stage, children are expected to be more mature and, therefore, think abstractly and critically.

In summary, in relation to the research question, "How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?", recognition plays a pivotal role in the construction of children's identity. Children appear to perceive a need to establish themselves within their group by defining their identity. Children show the need to be recognised as part of their significance of self-being. Inevitably, children build their recognition by referencing other individuals. The development of feelings occurs when the recognition occurs. For example, a child might feel happy because an adult or their peers acknowledge they are good at something or make progress towards a goal. Equally, the lack of recognition could lead to negative feelings such as frustration, sadness, upset, and embarrassment.

Smartness and Identity

It is clear from the data that children tend to give great emphasis to the fact of being recognised as 'smart' or the 'smartest' by their class at school or even within their social circle outside the school. Nevertheless, I ponder as to whether there are challenges in terms of the awareness and even understanding of what being smart means for children.

The questionnaires' analysis revealed that the question: "*Attending enrichment classes made me smarter at school and when visiting my friends who go to other schools*" had one hundred per cent of the children responding, 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. This suggests a positive attitude toward these activities. Children might feel that the experience of attending such activities is meaningful; also, children may perceive that attending enrichment activities produces an 'outcome', namely becoming smarter.

Many children are inclined to perceive that being 'smart' means being able to recall a myriad of facts and use this ability, in front of others, to demonstrate that they are indeed knowledgeable or to show to others what they are capable of in terms of knowledge. For instance, a child might think that recalling science facts is a good illustration of being smart. A clear reference to this was noted when I observed a science class working on the dissection of an ox's heart. During the session, I witnessed that children were guided by a Lead Tutor, who is a medical doctor and happens to be a specialist in cardiology, throughout the dissection of the heart. The Lead Tutor was explaining to a class mainly formed of children aged 7-11 what the heart does, the functionality of the arteries and the four chambers of the heart. After the Lead Tutor's explanation, one child constantly attempted to draw adults' attention by persistently calling out facts predominantly presented by the cardiologist. For example, there was an occasion when this child said:

> I know the heart has four or five chambers
> … I know this because I already learned this
> at my school. This [knowledge] makes me
> smarter than anyone else in the room …
>
> (Rebekah, interview)

However, Rebekah seemed to be unsure of the number of chambers of the heart and their function until the Lead tutor mentioned it to the class. I consider that in Rebekah's case there is an indication of self-belief. Yet, there was a struggle to recognise or recall accurately the fact of the four chambers of the heart but still she tried to appear knowledgeable in front of the rest of her peers. I suppose that the Rebekah's persistence of being recognised as successful by other children around her also indicates her need to be recognised and accepted as the 'smartest' in the class. At a later stage during the science session Rebekah said:

> … I have a tutor at home. She [the tutor]
> teaches me things that I don't see at school
> yet that makes me smarter than my friends.
>
> (Rebekah, interview)

Rebekah's statement implicitly defines 'identity' as one's feelings about one's self, character and goals. Rebekah's statement manifests a sense of 'oneself' rather than the characters or origins of 'others'. In other words, Rebekah tries to establish herself as the 'reference of the class' who also has the 'authority' to be able to recall facts and share knowledge with others as part of her identity of being the smartest on the course.

A different example of being 'the smartest' is provided by Marie-Jo who was regularly withdrawn during the sessions and initially was during the interview. In the interview, she initially showed negative emotions, stating:

> … I don't need to show off that I know
> things. I have a PhD teacher [tutor] after
> school that teaches me and helps me with
> the homework. I hate when my teacher
> doesn't stop other children calling out that
> try to show that they know a lot.
>
> It's not fair that always the same children
> always give most of the answers. I know the
> answers, but I don't like trying to be the
> smartest in the class …
>
> (Marie-Jo, interview)

Initially, Marie-Jo gives the impression that she is relegated or overwhelmed by other children's constant participation in lessons. However, in reality, Marie-Jo tends to be exceedingly reserved or very shy. She is aware of her level of knowledge being similar to or even greater than that of the other children in her class. But she prefers not to constantly express it to an audience.

I interpret Marie-Jo's reluctance to participate in lessons and the group of children constantly showing off their knowledge as a typical tension produced by the daily social interaction and interrelation between children and their intention of positioning themselves within their social group. Certainly, Marie-Jo portrays a sense of frustration as she thinks that the teacher does not do enough to prevent other children from over-participating in lessons. The perceived lack of her teacher's action seems to irritate Marie-Jo as she greatly dislikes other children dominating the scene. I suppose that this occurrence between Marie-Jo and her classmates indicates that the inter-relational world of the individual is constantly shaped by day-to-day experiences, as well as other factors nurtured by children's families and others in their social circles.

The analysis of identity and smartness through Piaget's lens sheds some light on how children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities. According to Piaget (1983), children progress through different stages of cognitive development, each stage being characterised by a certain degree of thinking and reasoning. As described in Chapter 2, children at the concrete operational stage start constructing more solid knowledge through experimentation and the apprehension of new experiences. It is in this stage that children make more abstract associations and assimilation and integrate new experiences into their existing knowledge. Therefore, the perception of becoming 'smarter' because of participating in enrichment activities might be a construction derived from active engagement and constant exploration that enhance children's intellectual growth.

Status and Identity

In this research, I define status as 'how other people perceive individuals to be within a particular social and cultural context'. Status is generally associated with class-related values and practices in parenting, particularly regarding education Irwin and Elley (2011) contend that the links between family background and children's life chances are part of a constant social intervention that contributes to model families' values and the understanding of how one is positioned within a social context.

Undeniably, the notion of status instilled in children appeared to be consistently fostered by their families, schools and other people around them. The understanding and significance that a child gives to their status does not necessarily emerge as a learned definition. For example, a typical child attending the weekend classes would not define themselves as having a particular status within a specific context. Nevertheless, a child might be aware of certain characteristics, family behaviour, social traits and many other attributes that help to define and understand what status means.

A clear reference to how many children seemingly perceive status became apparent when interviewing Olivia, who was 10 at the time I conducted the research:

> … I go to one of the best schools in London because I live in Chelsea. My best friend [Olivia's neighbour] also goes to a very good school but in South Kensington. After the 11-Plus [examination] my friend and me are hoping to go the same school in Chiswick …

> … I go to school [share the same class] with the daughter of TV presenter [name of TV presenter omitted] and other famous people …

> (Olivia, interview)

I perceived during the data collection process that many of the children appreciate the fact of attending a renowned school. The significance of attending a well-known school becomes greater as the child gets older. Olivia here shows a sense of satisfaction for two reasons: 1) going to a renowned school in Chelsea; and 2) the fact that the children of *"famous people"* attend school with her. As a researcher, I wondered why is important for Olivia to know that she goes to a good school and why is important to attend a class with children whose parents work on television.

I therefore asked Olivia:

> Olivia why is it important for you to go to your school?

Olivia said:

>Because I like my school and when I meet
>with other children [cousins and other
>friends] I can say that I go to [XXXX] school
>…
>
>>(Field notes)

I then asked:

>How about the famous people? Why are
>they relevant to you?

Olivia said without hesitation:

>… I don't know … because my mum always
>says to everyone that the daughter of XYZ is
>in my class or the son of XYZ goes to my
>school. Basically, I just repeat what my
>mum says to other people ...
>
>>(Field notes)

From Olivia's descriptions, it seems that her notion of status is centred on the type of school she attends and the recognition she gets for attending a prestigious school in Chelsea. For Olivia, the construction of status as part of her identity does not necessarily link to academic success or to a sense of achievement, similarly, when delving into Olivia's interest in attending school with children whose parents are publicly known. She does recognise that she is not fully aware of why she gives importance to other children's parents given that she does not know much about the 'famous' parents.

In contrast, Brian reveals the value of a wealth of opportunities that could be available for him through his school. Just like Olivia, Brian is aware of the type of school he is attending. The school is situated in north London, with an excellent reputation within the United Kingdom and even international recognition. Therefore, the school is normally oversubscribed. During the interview, Brian makes a reference to the importance of attending a good school. However, he is evidently focused on academic achievement.

When asked the question:

Why is it important for you to go to your school?

Brian replied:

Because my school is good and gives me a lot of opportunities for me to succeed. I want to be an engineer or a professor because my dad studied here [at Imperial College London] …

(Brian, interview)

For Brian, the academic aspect of his school is clearly important. He demonstrates that he has defined expectations. His response also reveals that his expectations are founded on his father as a good role model to emulate. In all, Brian perceives that the formation of his status and recognition lies in the respect he can gain from others in connection with his academic achievement. Undoubtedly, educational success is of paramount importance for Brian.

Identity: returning to the literature framework

The definition of identity I established for this work is centred on the self-characteristics or attributes constructed within a social and cultural context. Inevitably, identity formation derives from many factors, such as family values and beliefs, which profoundly influence religion, school, education and other factors. Constant exposure to these factors, particularly deeply ingrained family values and beliefs, nurture the formation of identity.

Piaget's stages of cognitive development offer indications of how children construct their identities. As discussed in the literature framework, Piaget (1970) depicts that children progress through various stages of cognitive development. During these stages, children actively construct an understanding of themselves and the world around them. Thus, the concrete operational stage is paramount for children to construct their identity because children start to think more abstractly and can develop thinking skills due to their tendency to be more logical during this stage. However, as Vygotsky (1978) posits, social interactions play a fundamental role in children's identity development as a result of their interactions with other individuals.

In all, I consider that the construction of identity is sustained by the constant exposure, interrelation and amalgamation of social, cultural and academic considerations, as well as other life experiences. I also deem that there are overarching characteristics that are part of social constructions that, at the same time, are fundamental to further understanding how identity is moulded. One defining characteristic is knowledge, which is not just individual but also collective. Knowledge is sustained by social processes such as communication, interaction and shared experiences, all of which play a significant role in shaping children's identities.

Aspirations and Career

For the purpose of this study, I defined aspirations as 'what children hope to pursue at an academic level and what children aspire to be at a professional level'. During this study, I perceived that the formation and realisation of pre-teenagers' or children's aspirations emerge from mediating and contextual system models that are typically driven by the effects of families' influence, as well as social structures, which at the same time constantly shape children's perceptions and decisions in relation to their peers or other children within their social circle.

I refer to a mediating system model to delineate the instrumental means of what society perceives needs to be done academically and socially. The mediating system is typically fostered and instilled by parents on their children to replicate parents' success academically and professionally. According to Bandura (1999), the mediating system model system is based on the social cognitive theory of an agentic view of personality. Within this view, people are expected to be organised, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating. The agentic view of personality is anticipated to be active rather than reactive. In addition, according to Bandura, people have the power to influence their actions with the aim of producing certain results.

In the data collection, particularly when interviewing and interacting with the parents, I observed that the drive to exert control and influence the motivation, affects, decisions and even thought processes of children seemed to be a fundamental need that is constantly manifested by parents through mechanisms of personal agency. Bandura (1999) argues that the agentic view of personality subscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency. In accordance with Bandura, I suggest that the agency effect instated by parents is influenced by the selection of socio-structural constrains and opportunities available in line with parents' social status. To justify the influence of socio-structural causes Bandura establishes the notion of Triadic Reciprocal Causation that refers to three factors that shape individuals' behaviour: personal, behavioural and environmental.

Within this context, the significance of parental social class depends on the activities, situational circumstances and social opportunities primarily provided by parents. In other words, the actions and influence of parents exerted on the children largely depends on their social status, financial circumstances and other factors, such as the desire of parents to want their children to emulate their own career choices and professional paths.

During the two rounds of data collection, it became apparent that in the 'real-world', the Triadic Reciprocal Causation is a rather dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon as opposed to being monolithic or static. Social cognitive theory, as described by Bandura, differentiates between three types of environmental structures: 1) the imposed environment; 2) the selected environment; and 3) the constructed environment. During the interviews with parents, the three types of environmental structures emerged as a fundamental factor, considering the element of fortuitous determinants in individuals' lives.

When interacting with parents, I encountered notable instances of the imposed situation within the environmental structure. An example of this is based on a parent who graduated as an engineer in the 1980s from Imperial College London. On this occasion, the parent wanted his child to attend Saturday engineering courses. When questioned about his reason to enrol his child on one on the engineering courses, the parent said:

> I enrolled my child in engineering
> because I graduated as an engineer
> back in the '80s here [Imperial College
> London]. I'm a successful engineer
> and I want my child to follow my
> steps as a [civil] engineer …

(Felix, interview)

I replied:

> OK, I see … but does Hugo like maths?
> Or does he like engineering?

The parent said:

> Well, I know he likes mathematics. I
> have been teaching him equations
> and other things he needs to know …

> (Felix, interview)

I asked:

> For engineering? Or for his maths at
> school?

The parent replied:

> I know what you mean … ultimately,
> I want my child to be an engineer …

> (Felix, interview)

I considered that it was still unclear as to why this parent wanted to impose the engineering course on his child. I then proceeded to ask a further question:

> How about if Hugo develops aptitude
> for different subjects, for example,

humanities subjects? Would you
support Hugo's decision?

The interviewee said:

It is still early days …

(Felix, interview)

From this interview extract, I deem that there are two elements that exerted full dominance from this parent on his child. The first is the power of the parent unilaterally imposing the engineering course on his child, as he wants his child to replicate his professional success. The second is the incidental circumstances that both parent and child encountered. For example, the influence of the fortuitous instance in which the parent happens to be an engineer and then finds an opportunity to enrol his child on a specialised engineering course at the same university from which he graduated. I consider that in practice Triadic Reciprocal Causation is a worthy approach that helps in understanding the interaction and influence that many parents have on their children.

Career: how do children experience and feel versus facing parental pressure?

Between the first and the second round of interviews, I had first-hand opportunity to ascertain that the persistent pressure from parents to impose their views and personal choices on their children can have a detrimental effect on the development of children. I witnessed a clear example of this when I noticed that Hugo enjoyed the engineering sessions he attended. It appears that Hugo was actively participating and seemingly valued session after session. Later, and a week before the second round of interviews, Hugo's father approached me and asked me:

Can I have a word with you?

I replied:

> Yes, how can I help you?

The parent said:

> I spoke with Gloria [Felix's wife] and
> we decided that Hugo should be
> attending coding [Python] sessions
> instead of the engineering ones …

I said:

> Are you sure? It seems to me that
> Hugo thoroughly enjoys his
> engineering sessions. Have you
> spoken with Hugo about the potential
> change between subjects?

The parent replied:

> I know, but children in this area [West
> London] are mainly into coding. I
> don't want Hugo to fall behind
> compared to his friends. So, after
> speaking to my wife, we decided to
> transfer Hugo from engineering to
> coding classes …

At this stage, I was still attempting to elicit Hugo's father ultimate underlying motivations for changing his son's classes. I therefore said:

> We normally ask parents to speak to their
> children before making such changes. The reason
> being is that when someone disrupts children's
> routine it may be counterproductive. From
> experience dealing with teenagers, I know that
> this might be the case.

However, the parent still insisted:

> He [Hugo] is done with engineering …
> We [husband and wife] decided that
> Hugo needs to start coding sessions
> from next week …

<div align="center">(Felix, Field notes)</div>

The following week, Hugo attended his first coding session. During the coding session, I observed that Hugo was withdrawn and reluctant to participate or even attempt to engage with his peers and was generally not interested to hear what the tutor was explaining to the group of children. In fact, during the session, I approached Hugo and asked him:

> Why the long face, Hugo?
> Are you OK?

Hugo, politely, replied:

Yes, I'm fine … I'm not sure why my dad insists in me doing this [coding class], I definitely have more fun doing engineering. This is my [free] time and I want to have fun but I'm not today.

(Felix, Field notes)

After the class dismissal and when speaking to other parents, I noticed that Hugo's father wanted to speak to me. Hugo's father was clearly unhappy and asked me if you could speak in a room where he could air his concerns about the coding session his child just attended.

The parent said:

My child complained about the [coding] session being boring, disengaging and tedious. I want to know why. I want to know what happened … Do you know why this happened …?

(Felix, Field notes)

I swiftly replied:

I was in the session and I can tell you more about it. I mentioned to you that these courses are based on what children like. During the session, I

approached Hugo and I asked him if
he was OK and he said: "*Yes, I'm fine*".
As an experienced educator, I'm
afraid that I can't force children to say
one thing or another. When Hugo said
to me that he was fine, I left him
alone.

The conflict between social determinants (factors in society that define how people, within a specific social circle, behave in relation to society) and social constructions (factors that are formed by individuals based on their social and cultural experiences, status, perceptions and beliefs) fostered and imposed by Hugo's father clashed with the expectations and motivations of Hugo, and even his feelings. Given the nature of the human interaction between parents and their children, it is unrealistic to expect a child to 'choose' a particular career path without parents taking into consideration that their child's personal factors might be more significant than their own expectations.

I conclude as a result of my analysis that the fostering of academic aspirations in children can significantly influence their academic and career aspirations. Many of the parents who participated in this study consider that cultivating academic aspirations in children as early as possible will support children to make career decisions when they grow up. Indeed, the children's subsequent academic choices will be a key driving force in the professional careers they wish to pursue at a later stage in their lives. From interviews and interactions with parents, I noticed that the mediating model tacitly takes the approach of working for and obtaining qualifications as a means of securing the subsequent career success of an individual. In other words, the instrumental manner of the mediating system emerges from the necessity to obtain an academic qualification as it is going to help one to advance further professionally in life.

In contrast, the contextual system is driven by schools and socio-economic experiences and how experiences are perceived and internalised by an individual. I deem that the contextual system model is an amplification of the mediating model due to its purpose and goal in relation to an individual. For instance, the mediating model seeks to make use of an educational path taken at private schools and highly regarded universities with an aim to secure children's success in life, both academically and professionally. Nevertheless, I consider that the contextual system provides an insight into the differences of experiences and how those experiences are understood and assumed within a socio-economic context. In all, both the mediating and the contextual systems appear to indicate that socio-economic context plays a key role in ultimately shaping occupational progression and success. The importance of educational credentials and the importance of occupational success seem heavily to influence parents' decisions and stimuli towards their children.

Career: linked to the literature framework

Regarding career aspirations and parental pressure, children can experience a complex emotional journey that can significantly influence their perceptions and feelings. Of course, as human beings, children can experience both positive and negative emotions and their parents can affect these emotions when pressuring their children to pursue a career path.

Parental pressure, viewed through a Vygotskyan lens, can be seen as a potential source of support and guidance for children. Parents, as 'more knowledgeable others', can provide valuable insights and direction based on their experience, expertise and knowledge within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). However, this pressure can also manifest negatively, leading to excessive demands or guidance that triggers anxiety, stress and a constant feeling in children of being overwhelmed.

Considering how children experience and feel about their career aspirations while managing parental pressure, Bourdieu's concept of schooling provides a valuable framework. As presented in Chapter 2, Bourdieu depicts that schooling perpetuates social inequalities by reproducing cultural capital. Besides, from a Bourdieuan stance, I consider that children from privileged backgrounds may perceive access to private education, resources and parental connections as a right. Therefore, this elicits a sense of achievement and confidence in children. On the other hand, children from underprivileged backgrounds may have an utterly different experience, which can potentially create negative feelings such as low self-esteem, embarrassment and self-doubt.

11-Plus / Common Entrance and Schooling

Before analysing this code, I contextualise what 11-Plus and Common Entrance examinations are and what such examinations entail for those who pursue them.

The 11-Plus is an examination taken by some children, in England and Northern Ireland, in their last year of their primary school education. The examination influences the admission to some independent secondary schools and state grammar which use the examination. The examination requires four disciplines to be covered: verbal reasoning, non-verbal-reasoning, mathematics and English. Most of the examination is based on multiple choice answers, except for English, which is typically a longer, written piece of work. To this study, I mainly focused on the 11-Plus as it is the most common examination taken by many children seeking admission to independent secondary schools. All children who participated in this study were preparing to sit the 11-Plus at the time I collected the data for this research.

Common Entrance is the name of a set of examinations taken by children aged 11 upwards for entrance to senior independent schools. Common Entrance examinations provide a common basis from which a particular independent school

compares candidates from different preparatory schools. As in the 11-Plus examination, the pass mark varies depending on the senior school.

The main difference between the 11-Plus and Common Entrance examinations is that the 11-Plus can also be used by some state grammar schools whereas Common Entrance tends only to be taken by children who attend independent preparatory schools and wish to continue their secondary school education within the independent sector.

Relevance of the examinations

To comprehend this section of the data analysis, I consider that is appropriate to provide a general account of the usual admission process followed by many schools. From this perspective, both examinations are used as a method to differentiate and select applicants. For instance, the differentiation is determined by the examinations' pass mark thresholds. The usual pass mark for both examinations is 80%, though it varies depending on different school requirements. This 'initial' pass mark reduces the number of applicants remaining in the selection process. However, a figure of 80% may not be sufficient and schools sometimes use other criteria to determine candidates' suitability.

Ultimately, the main reason for independent schools using the 11-Plus or Common Entrance examinations is to filter the number of applicants and select the ones that tend to perform better academically. For parents, the relevance of having their children take the examinations seems to be linked to their school choices and their attitudes towards a selective education system. I analyse the latter motive at a later stage in this section.

The process leading up to the examinations

Before the examinations, parents normally commence searching for independent schools for their children. Normally, parents select between three to five schools of

their preference or by recommendation. Thereafter, parents do their own research on what the admission process entails. Parents make their list of choices and know what they need to do with their children in relation to the admission process of each school they wish to apply for. The process is normally started by parents two years before the estimated time when the child is going to the sit the relevant examination. In some cases, parents start the preparation 11-Plus or Common Entrance examinations, four or five years in advance before sitting the examination, when the child is around six or seven years old.

A typical preparation process for the examinations involves frequent and continuous private tutoring on each subject, coaching on examination and interview techniques, attendance at extra classes with a particular focus on past paper questions, along with attending other courses or undertaking certain activities that might contribute to the child's success during the application and admission process.

What happens in reality?

During the data collection, it emerged that many parents who live in affluent areas in London, and more specifically those who participated in this study, actively foster the need to put their children in for the 11-Plus or Common Entrance examinations. As a result, many parents seem to frantically spend time and money on extra private tuition and other resources to ensure that their children secure the highest possible mark. The fierce approach taken by many parents in relation to the examinations begs the following question: what is the need for such an aggressive approach, putting children under an enormous amount of pressure?

I attempt to answer this question by delving into how parents perceive and understand these examinations. Within this context, I noticed competition between parents to ensure that their children secure the highest possible marks and the

school of their choice. This appears to be a common occurrence that emerged when interviewing some parents.

To understand what children experience and how they feel about the above-mentioned examinations, it is vital to address how much parental pressure directly influences children's experiences and feelings. Understanding the reasons why parents want their children to sit the 11-Plus or Common Entrance examination could indicate how parental pressures intersect with the way children feel about being engaged in the exam preparation process. The interview passages below offer an indication of how much pressure children can be exposed to due to their parents' decisions to sit the examinations.

A parent whose child attended the Saturday class for three years said:

> As you know, Tara is preparing for the
> 11-Plus exam in January next year.
> She is strong in English, but I still need
> to get her to be strong in maths. She
> gets on well with it [mathematics] but
> is not good enough for the exam. Tara
> needs to get better at worded
> questions …

> (Annie, interview)

I asked:

> How are you planning to get Tara to
> become stronger in maths?

The parent said:

> She'll have a [private] tutor three
> times a week but when the exam gets

closer, she'll see the tutor every day

…

<div align="center">(Annie, interview)</div>

Another parent, however, initially seemed to have a very different approach to the 11-Plus exam. During a conversation, the parent said:

> Rafael, I'm not into the craziness of
> these parents [other parents within
> Mita's social circle] who are relentlessly
> talking about the 11-Plus and finding
> PhD tutors to teach their children and
> even talking about how many marks
> get children into what school … I'm
> definitely out of that. Let the child be …
> I don't understand these parents. I'm
> Scandinavian and my attitude is that
> Liliana [her daughter] gets into any
> school. For me is about her happiness
> so it's not about the 11-Plus …

<div align="center">(Mita, field note)</div>

However, closer to the examination, Mita appeared to change her attitude towards the 11-Plus and the direction her child was taking:

> Rafael, I was talking to other parents
> and I'm slightly concerned because I
> think Liliana is not going to get the
> school that I want her to go to …

<div align="center">(Mita, field note)</div>

I said:

> I thought that you were more focused
> on getting Liliana into a school that
> she feels happier. Are you looking for
> a school now?

Mita said:

> … Well, I want Liliana to go to a
> very good school as her friends
> already made their choices and
> they are prepared for the 11-Plus.
> Now, she has a tutor coming
> [home] every day to prepare her
> for the exam. I know she'll do
> well. Well, the most important
> thing is that she feels happy, but I
> want her to go to a top school …

(Mita, field note)

It was evident that Mita changed her mind about having a relaxed approach towards the 11-Plus exam. Mita's 'U turn' had been drawn to my attention as it appeared that she was putting an enormous amount of pressure on Liliana to do well in the 11-Plus examination. In effect, within a few weeks it was apparent that the child was trying to cope with her normal work at the school plus the relentless exam preparation which involved face-to-face tuition plus additional independent practice for the examination on the days the private tutor was not scheduled to teach.

I initially wondered whether Mita's changing her mind in relation to the 11-Plus was driven by the mediating system described by Bandura (1999). Bandura's mediating system argues that parents foster conditions for their children to replicate their academic and professional success. Nevertheless, the reason why I hesitate about this explanation was Mita's initial reluctance to copy what others within her social circle where doing. In addition, Mita proudly mentioned her Scandinavians roots and how the Scandinavian system focuses more on the happiness of the child than on examination results. Mita's original priority was her child's happiness instead of putting her child in competition with other children to obtain a place at a school.

On reflection, I suspect that Mita's change of opinion was heavily influenced, even driven, by what Maxwell (2014) defined as 'concerted cultivation' that stresses academic and social achievement above all else. In line with Maxwell, for some families, the decision to educate their children privately and the choice about the school they select is driven by the desire of concerted cultivation. I ponder that Mita's decision was heavily influenced by other parents within her social circle.

Comparing the questionnaire responses against the interview extracts and focusing on the item "My family (mum, dad, older brother or sister) motivated me to do better with my future studies", all participants responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" in both rounds of questionnaires. The positive answer indicates how children feel supported about their school journey and, by extension, in the application process that involves the 11-Plus or Common Entrance examinations. Therefore, the intersection between parental pressure and how children feel about being put through the examinations appears to be carefully balanced as, on the one hand, these parents can be exceptionally 'pushy', but, on the other hand, judging by children's affirmative responses, it seems that children manage to feel motivated.

Despite the initial differences between expectations and attainment driven by families and schools, many parents' attitudes towards the 11-Plus and Common Entrance examinations seemed to vary depending on their outlook towards selective education. Irrespective of their ability and financial, cultural, and social

capital, parents regularly sought to secure places for their children at highly reputable secondary schools. Likewise, the seeming balance between parental pressure and how children feel during the examination preparation provides insight into the dynamics of children perceiving parental pressure as a positive occurrence. For instance, some children may experience parental pressure as support and encouragement to do well or meet their parents' expectations.

Children may also experience parental pressure positively when parents' expectations align with children's aspirations and goals. Revisiting Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), children may perceive parental pressure positively when the ZPD offers challenge but at the same time offers support (Vygotsky, 1978).

Peer relationships and schooling

I examine children's peer relationships and the affective component and the behavioural component of peer relationships with the purpose of contextualising and understanding what underpins the sense of competition and motivations between peers.

Drawing on my own professional experience in schools and when undertaking the data collection for this study, I observed that peers in general tend to play a prominent, even central, role in children's lives during the school years. Molloy et al (2011) argue that peers tend to influence a variety of domains, including the academic one. One of the main reasons for the academic domain to be highly influenced by peers' interaction is peers' constant social contact, the types of social ties peers have, and the common academic environment peers attend, such as school settings. Within the academic domain, Bandura (1999) and Molly et al (2011) assert two key factors that can be perceived as crucial in the interaction between peers. The first is the 'achievement motivation' that involves cognitive, affective

and behavioural actions. The second is an environmental influence that encompasses a broader consideration of other influences that affect peers.

For this study, I focused on the contextualisation and understanding of achievement motivation. I also considered examining environmental influences. Nevertheless, I deemed that surveying environmental influences would have diverted this research from one of its main foci which is scrutinising and understanding children's motivations to attend out-of-school-hours enrichment activities. From this perspective, in line with Bandura (1999) and Molloy et al (2011), I define achievement motivation as the interaction of the affective and behavioural components. The affective component refers to the involvement of perceptions, emotions and feelings and the behavioural component embodies academic engagement, participation and social comparison.

The data analysis elucidates the unique role of peers' relationships and the influence of peers on the process of decision-making on others. Also, to accomplish a better understanding of peers' interaction, I attempt to deconstruct peers' behaviour under the above-mentioned theoretical framework.

The affective component

The affective component refers to the involvement of emotions, feelings and assumptions of children in relation to academic success. As discussed earlier, Piaget emphasised that children have an important role to play in the developmental process and adaption to social environments (Piaget, 1970). Children are individuals who are in the early stage of developing their own perceptions, emotions and feelings. As individuals, children develop their own subjectivity, their own spatial awareness and their own understanding of the world surrounding them. Within this context, peer interaction is a significant factor that contributes to developing children's feelings and emotions.

From a young age, children naturally tend to compare themselves with other children. For instance, children tend to compare themselves with siblings, relatives and friends who are at the same time a primary source of socialisation and social comparison. Certainly, socialisation and comparison increase the need to accommodate each other's opinions, resolve conflicts and establish a common ground for understanding and consensus. In spite of this, feelings and emotions still play a significant role, illustrating how the affective component is fundamental to understand children's perceptions and motivations.

I recognised that feelings are a significant factor that helps children to form their own opinions and make their own choices. This became apparent when I interacted with Hugo and we spoke about his motivations to attend a specific course despite his father's determination to make him attend a different course. I was interested to follow up a conversation with Hugo due to the tension between what his parents wanted him to do and what he aspired to do.

I asked Hugo:

>How are you feeling in engineering?

Hugo:

>I feel better. This is what I really wanted to
>do …

>>(Hugo, field notes)

Then, I continued:

>I can see that. I know that you were
>upset last week. Then, I asked you
>several times if you were OK but you
>said that you were fine. So, I left you

alone. This is why I didn't talk to you during the session. But your tutor told me that you were not interested at all. The tutor approached you to help you, but you were not interested. Is that true?

Hugo:

… Yes, that is true. I wasn't interested because I told my parents that I didn't want to do Python [coding] because I don't like it. But they said that other children of my age are doing it. I don't like it. I wanted to do engineering instead, but they wouldn't listen …

(Hugo, field notes)

I said:

How does that make you feel?

Hugo:

As I said, I wanted to do engineering. My parents wouldn't listen. They just wanted me to do Python and they decided that I should do Python. Without listening to me ...

(Hugo, field notes)

I then said:

But I spoke with your mum and your dad and I'm sure that they spoke with you because they told me.

Hugo:

Yes, they spoke to me but to convince
me to do Python. Then, I said that I
wanted to attend engineering, but
they still wanted me to do Python. I'm
not happy about that …

(Hugo, field notes)

Certainly, the tension between Hugo and his parents emerges from the imposition of the parents' idea of getting Hugo to develop a new skill rather than taking into account Hugo's opinions, feelings and motivation to attend another course. It is perfectly appropriate to think that Hugo can develop new skills by attending a different course. Nevertheless, what appears to be missing, at least to some extent, in this situation is the consideration by his parents of Hugo's thoughts, feelings and opinions. Within this context, the difference between the adults' and the child's perception appears to be due to a combination of factors. For example, the parents desire for Hugo to emulate what other children are doing within their social circle and the parental imposition of what they consider their child should or must do. This approach brought about a clash between both parents and the child due to their expectations.

To summarise, the difference between the adults' and the child's feelings and opinions appears to be due to a combination of variation in the understanding and perceptions of what appears to be the best options available and what needs to be done to advance in the development of new or existing skills.

The behavioural component: the role of social interaction

I refer to Piaget's theory of social interaction to help comprehend how academic engagement, participation and social comparison incorporate the view that the social world, in which children develop, has an important role to play in children's developmental processes and understanding of the world surrounding them.

Piaget (1970) shows that peers' closeness and friendship are central elements for them to develop a good source of social comparison. For example, peers are likely to compare their own grade achievements, their self-conception achievement and non-achievement and the effects of another peer positioning 'higher' in relation to others. According to Piaget (1970), youth evaluate their own skill level by comparing their abilities with those of their peers. Thereafter, children's academic self-concept of achievement depends on their perceptions of their own skills relative to those of their peer reference group.

From a Vygotskyan stance, children's experiences and feelings are affected by social interaction and cognitive development. Therefore, for Vygotsky (1978), peer relationships are essential for children to learn to collaborate and develop social skills. The processes between socialisation (friendship and interaction between peers) and social comparison (how children perceive and understand their academic achievement in relation to others) may build the incorporation of academic self-concepts, association and assimilation in which peers become more similar to their peers over time.

Peer interaction provides an opportunity for cooperative problem-solving skills development, scaffolding and socio-cultural transmission of knowledge and skills. As justified by Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development elucidates the importance of peer collaboration in forming children's learning and developing non-cognitive skills. In other words, the agency of the zone of proximal development significantly influences how children interrelate with their peers, social learning, cooperation and their overall emotional well-being (Rubin et al, 2006).

Similarly, Bourdieu's theory of schooling contributes to understanding the role of social class and cultural capital in shaping individual social experiences and interactions within an educational setting (Bourdieu, 1986). As discussed in Chapter 2, Bourdieu considers that individuals from a privileged background may have the resources and connections to afford them social capital. In contrast, individuals

from a less favourable background may face barriers to social integration and a sense of belonging in a privileged society. For Bourdieu, the interaction between individuals also helps to shape how children understand and make sense of the world around (Bourdieu, 1986). To conclude, peer relations accentuate the importance of cultural capital and the interplay between addressing barriers and fostering environments that can promote positive peer relationships.

4.6 Parents' data analysis

For the analysis of the data obtained from the parents, I identified four codes that I derived from parents' interviews and my field notes. Thereafter, I labelled and grouped the categories that emerged from the parental data as Parents. Each category embodied at least one code that reflect significant ways of thinking of parents participating in this research.

As with the analysis of children's data, I carried out the analysis of the parents' data after the identification and organisation of categories using the same approach. My aim was to describe, explore and systemise the parents' accounts to perceive and understand clues that could help me recognise and interpret significant evidence to answer my research questions. Again, it is not my intention to quantify data or to construct any statistical model. My aim is to analyse the parental data and, at the same time, outline patterns in the parents' behaviour and attitudes during the data collection.

Based on the above, Table 4.2 shows the codes and categories that I identified in the parents' data.

Table 4.2. Overview of parents' categories and codes

	Codes	Category
Parents	Ethnicity	Identity
	Status and social comparison	
	Family patterns (replication)	Family life
	Career choices	Career

Ethnicity and Identity

As described earlier, the notion of identity is a relatively recent social construct. It typically refers to the 'sameness' of a person or of a thing (Fearon, 1999). For consistency, I continue to adhere to the concept of identity that I used to analyse the children's data earlier in this chapter and define identity as the self-characteristics or attributes constructed within a social and cultural context. By extension, identity can also be defined as the awareness of 'individuality' and 'otherness'.

Understandably, parents' perceptions and constructions of identity are formed somewhat differently from children's perceptions and constructions of identity. In effect, parents tend to construct their identity firmly connected to several layers of personal achievements, social interactions, and many other professional and personal life experiences. One of the codes that drew my attention was the connection between ethnicity and identity. During the interviews with parents, I noticed that certain ethnicities or cultural groups tend to perceive and approach education differently. For instance, one parent said:

> I want my child to do well in life. In my
> family and my culture, we have a tradition

of academic success. My previous generation [her parents] came to the UK with practically nothing. My parents' priority was to ensure that we had good education so we could do well in life … My parents worked hard when they came here [to the UK]. They want us to aspire to be solicitors, engineers, scientists and pursue high profile professional careers …

(Meera, interview)

I asked:

I understand the commitment and how resolute your parents were about providing you with the best education but what does it have to do with culture? Perhaps, this is a more personal approach than anything else?

Meera:

… Well … it is the way we do things. If you see, all other parents that share my own heritage. They have the same goals that I have for my children. It is a cultural thing …

(Meera, interview)

At this point in the interview, I comprehended that Meera was proud of her heritage and the way her cultural traditions perceive education. It seems that for Meera, education was a way to position herself within her social circles. According

to Regmi (2003), these days ethnicity is contextualised and modelled in relation to somebody else. identity is the derivation and expression of manipulable and changeable features in relation to the 'other'. Under this viewpoint, it is therefore almost impossible to delineate the ending of one cultural identity and the beginning of another.

I suggest that Meera seems to interpret a broad value of education according to her own experience and consequently extrapolates her experience as a general norm that it is allegedly followed by her own cultural group. In doing so, she possibly falls into the trap of ethnic stereotypes. In her narrative, Meera certainly identifies with and is fully aware of the values of education and the benefits that education brought about for her at personal level. Further, she does compare her success and even her family success with others within her social circle.

Regmi (2003) argues that people in well-established ethnic groups develop a distinctive culture and when away from their own culture are more likely to exaggerate conspicuous traits and construct a shorthand depiction of them. Undoubtedly, stereotypes might not be accurate. Nevertheless, stereotypes can represent the ways in which people perceive and possibly understand each other. I interpret that this might be the case for Meera. According to Meera's accounts she unwittingly tends to assume that her personal formation is a distinctive cultural trait that is associated with her cultural heritage. Nonetheless, I consider that ethnicity in general does not fulfil all the conditions of becoming a standardised mono-national or pluri-cultural, agglomerated cultural system.

Returning to the literature review, more specifically to Bowlby's attachment theory, and analysing Meera's interview excerpt, ethnicity seems to play an important role in shaping her identity. However, it can be challenging to conjecture how identity influences parents' motivations to enrol their children in enrichment activities. I interpret Bowlby's attachment theory, a significant theoretical framework, as illustrating how identity influences parents' motivations. As described in the literature review chapter, early experiences with their important caregivers

influence people's expectations, behaviours and feelings in social contexts (Bowlby, 1982). Meera appears to trust. She has a sense of safety and comfort, presumably based on the cultural transmission including values that she received from her parents, and then she wants to transfer to her child.

In conclusion, the intersection of the attachment theory and parents' motivations, significantly influenced by their parental identities, highlights the importance of the relationship between the caregiver and the child in which parents value communal bonds, peer interactions and a sense of belonging that affect the way parents make their decisions and the types of decisions they make. For instance, decisions can be deemed beneficial or favourable to their children (Bowlby, 1982). In contrast, parents and children with insecure attachment might not be able to resolve attachment issues and might display signs of insecurity, negativity, anxiety and even overprotection. In the contemporary world, ethnic groups follow recognisable patterns. Nonetheless, it cannot be substantiated that because a parent comes from a specific heritage, their child is more inclined to succeed academically.

Status and social comparison and Identity

Earlier, I defined status as how other people perceive individuals to be within a particular social and cultural context. I also described that status is generally associated with class-related values and practices in parenting, particularly regarding education. For consistency, I continue using the same definition to examine and interpret the parents' data.

Status is tightly intertwined with social comparison and the underlying psychology of competition. Social comparison is the tendency to self-evaluate by comparing ourselves with others. In effect, social comparison seeks to position an individual in relation to others, considering a wide range of attitudes and behaviour. To better understand social comparison, Garcia et al (2013) highlight two main factors that influence social comparison: individual factors and situational factors.

The individual factors for social comparison refer to the similarity of rivals, relationships and closeness between individuals and other similarities between individuals, whereas the situational factors point at similarly situated individuals in relation to a ranking, number of competitors and proximity within the same social circle.

Social comparison is ubiquitous; certainly, during the data collection I observed that many parents seek to reassert their social status by engaging with activities that are perceived to be part of the expected pattern within their social circle. For instance, it seems that a parent from an affluent background is expected to enrol their child at a top private school, and their child must have private tutoring support for school homework and even for extra-curricular activities. Likewise, many affluent parents normally appear continually to overwhelm their children with expectations, demands and activities that in many cases increases pressure on their children's mental wellbeing.

Many of the parents regularly tended to compare themselves against their peers to achieve a superior position within their social circle, in a variety of contexts, as part of their daily social dynamics. Garcia et al (2013) argue that situational factors are interconnected with social comparison and competitiveness. Consequently, I deem that the root of social comparison and competitiveness originates from the individual and their awareness of their social status. Social comparison manifests when an individual is aware of their social status. For example, the individual is aware and assesses their income, social capital, assets, cultural background, education and so forth. After consideration of these personal factors, the individual normally establishes social and distinctive differences to start forming competitive dispositions.

During the data collection, according to my field notes, I observed that all the parents who participated in this research were clearly aware of their social status. As a fundamental starting point, most of them, within the same social circle, actively seek to engage with activities that nurture and grow, or at least maintain,

their social status. Likewise, I also observed that within the educational context, many parents appear to give more relevance to situational factors than to individual factors. As previously portrayed, situational factors define individuals in relation to a ranking such as higher expected values, number of competitors, proximity to others, proximity to a standard and so forth.

I suppose that the significance given to situational factors is of particular importance in determining the level of social comparison and competitiveness. The concern with competitiveness is that in many cases children are unwittingly involved in the social comparison exercised by their parents. Thereafter, many children echo and even emulate their parents in relation to the way they perceive themselves and others with regards to social status.

For instance, during the data collection, it was common to hear children, as young as eight years old, talk about being the best at playing the violin, piano or tennis. Equally, it was a regular occurrence to hear children talking about their parents' assets, well-paid managerial jobs or successful enterprises, luxury holidays abroad, sports cars or yachts among other similar topics. I judge that the interactions and conversations among children serve to try to enhance their status which also signifies a comparative judgment based on a layer of prestige, social standing, identity and culture. It is noteworthy to observe how children construct their social standing based on social comparison that is widely replicated from their parents' behaviour.

In summary, referring to the literature review and focusing on parents' motivations, Durkheim's work on sociological schooling also aids in comprehending how schooling systems might influence parents' social status and how parents perceive and construct social comparison processes. For Durkheim (1956), schools are regarded as institutions that encourage social constructions and social identities. He considered that schools can promote cohesion and stability by influencing individuals who might positively contribute to society. Festinger (1954) describes that social comparison involves individuals evaluating themselves and others in

relation to social standards, social circles, economic and educational criteria. Therefore, parents' motivations are influenced by how parents see their roles and responsibilities in relation to others. From this perspective, schooling contextualises and shapes parental identities and facilitates social comparisons processes. In other words, schools seem to amalgamate several factors that influence parents' motivations, such as social status and competitiveness. A process of social comparison influences parental motivations as parents may compare their children's educational experiences and achievements with those of other children within their social circles or their children's peers to measure their own success in society.

Family patterns (replication) and family Life

I define family patterns as the collection of family activities, traditions and ways of doing things within a family. In general, family patterns are affected by several factors, such as ethnicity, culture, gender role attributes, level of education, social status, and level of interaction between members of the family. In the analysis of these data, I predominantly concentrate on patterns in the level of education and social status of families as I am interested in examining what influences parents' decisions to enrol their children on a specific enrichment course.

It is evident from the data that family patterns are important factors that distinctively influence children's choices, behaviours, preferences and even decision-making processes. Indeed, many children are inclined to follow the guidance, instructions and way of doing things that are largely coined by their parents (in some cases by other relatives). Undoubtedly, almost all parents naturally want the best for their children. Therefore, there is an intrinsic desire, from parents, to ensure that children replicate their parents' success.

During the interviews, I was interested in elucidating what motivates parents to enrol their children in specific enrichment activities. The common answer that I

obtained was to get children to experience school subjects from a different perspective or a more practical approach. For instance, many parents indicated that science is normally taught in schools from textbooks with only scarce opportunities to enthuse children with experiments. Consequently, the main interest of parents, who enrolled their children on a science course, was to improve their children's experience of and perception about science, and other standard school subjects, such as English, mathematics and geography.

Interestingly, the rationale to get children to experience traditional school subjects in a practical manner significantly changes when parents enrol their children on our courses that are not seen as traditional school subjects, for example, engineering, robotics, and coding. Parents' whole narrative about enrolling their children on non-traditional school subjects changes towards a more profoundly pragmatic argument that conveys the idea of replicating parents' success.

For a parent, it is reasonable to provide the best resources they can afford for their children. It is equally plausible that parents foster the best opportunities for their children. Nevertheless, I consider that for the benefit of the child, the reproduction of family patterns should be accompanied by a thorough understanding of the child as an individual. If this is not the case, parents' perceptions and vision for their children are very likely to clash with their children's perceptions and understanding of the world. These types of clashes are frequently evident when parents resolutely impose their vision on what children *must do* to emulate their parents' success.

To understand the reasons that motivate parents to encourage their children to explore a range of subjects, I examined the term 'explore', taking into consideration the epistemological stance I used to approach this study. As argued earlier in this study, an epistemological constructivist approach permits ways of conceiving the problem of exploration of knowledge and its association with social and cultural considerations (Larochelle et al, 1998). In this context, the idea of encouraging children to explore certain subjects might be linked to distinctive layers associated with socio-economic and cultural concerns. In essence, I interpreted that the idea of

parents motivating their children to explore subjects primarily originates from parents themselves attempting to expose their children to a wider range of opportunities, with the aim of making their children aware of a different reality beyond the school. Another reason might be the idea of trying to engage children with certain subjects that might eventually translate into emulating their parents' careers.

This became apparent when I interviewed Camilla. Camilla's daughter (Francesca) initially attended science sessions on Saturday mornings for around one year. Thereafter, Camilla decided to move Francesca from science to a technology course. During the interview I asked Camilla:

> Camilla, I see that Francesca moved onto technology courses. What is your main reason to make such decision?

Camilla:

> As you know, Rafael, she goes to one of the best independent schools in London and I want Francesca to experience something that is not common to the school. You know how competitive these schools are, and I want Francesca to be ahead of the game [compared to her peers]. If you think carefully, the new generation of children will be doing jobs that don't currently exist …
>
> (Camilla, Interview)

Rafael:

> Give me an example.

Camilla:

>Think of all the fintech apps and Uber, Deliveroo, artificial intelligence apps that 10, 15 years ago were not available. Then, if you take that into account, think of what new jobs my child and her generation will be doing in 10 years' time … Also, remember that my husband is a successful businessman and we want Francesca to be successful too whichever route she chooses, either having a respectable job or being successful in business like my husband …

>(Camilla, Interview)

From Camilla's responses, I interpret that as a mother her main motivation for exploring an extra-curricular subject is to ensure that her daughter is exposed to a wider range of options than the traditional mainstream subjects taught at schools. The approach taken by Camilla depicts a clear purpose to identify if her daughter has the necessary aptitude to understand and engage with a technology subject, rather than making Francesca aware of other things to do out of school hours.

Evidently, Camilla understands that knowing and learning, instead of leaning on a construed context, would eventually help her to make a better decision when considering career choices for her child or when exerting significant influence on her child's personal interests. I perceived that Camilla's consideration in motivating her child to explore a technology subject was influenced by the interdependence of social and cultural associations. In this case, this was made apparent when Camilla cited her husband's success and the importance of having a respectable job and

professional career. These two reasons of Camilla's, whether consciously or unconsciously, are empiricist assumptions about motivations and socio-cultural constructions, embodied on her experiences and cemented by her socio-economic status. These include Camilla's operating mechanisms to determine her child's choices, to shape up her child's personal interests and her attempt to replicate her child's potential success in relation to her husband's professional experience.

Family patterns, in essence, are a product of the family and its social environment, influencing both individual and collective behaviour and cognition. However, it is crucial to remember that the imposition of these patterns should always consider the unique realities, aspirations, and interests of individuals, as well as their thoughts, feelings and actions. Including these factors leads to a better understanding and explanation of social behaviours and provides valuable insights into the complexity of social interactions. As depicted earlier, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction sheds some light on what motivates parents to encourage their children to reproduce their social and cultural capital, highlighting the transmission of advantages and inequalities within society.

For Bourdieu (1986), parents achieve the intergenerational replication of family patterns when they employ various strategies to transmit social and cultural capital to their children, including educational investments, cultural exposure and access to social connections. Parents motivation to ensure their children can replicate their socio-economic success is primarily driven by the parents' desire for their children to match their high-status cultural practices, culture and social experiences.

Career choices

Conventionally, career choice seems to be an individual decision. For instance, a young person in the latter part of their secondary school studies may start considering which career they want to pursue at university level. This decision-making process seems to be straightforward and a very personal one. However,

behind the career choice consideration there are a myriad of factors that help to shape the decision of pursuing a particular university course or career. These factors range from parental and family influence to school and social interaction between peers, friends and other individuals within the same social circle. Nevertheless, one of the most prevailing factors is still parental influence.

Jungen (2008) argues that parents have a profound impact on the career selection process of their children. At the same time, Jungen argues that parental influence on career choice is affected by other social and cultural layers such as family values and gender stereotyping. In the interview extract shown below, I identified how family values consciously or unconsciously affect the decision-making process related to career choice. The parent whom I interviewed (Rena) had some robust views on traditional family values and gender roles. Her child (Benedict) was enrolled in one of our engineering courses.

Rena:

>I enrolled Ben [Benedict] because I want to see if he will eventually follow the same career as his grandfather. My father was a successful engineer. He worked in multiple projects here [in the United Kingdom], France and Egypt …

>(Rena, interview)

Rafael:

>Is your husband an engineer as well?

Rena**:**

>No, my husband works in finance …
>But I thought this interview was about

Ben. So, I'm not sure why you are
asking about my husband's job …

(Rena, interview)

Rafael:

I'm sorry. I'm interested in finding out
if your husband is an engineer
because I thought that children
normally tend to follow their parents'
professional careers.

Rena:

No, not in this case. As I told you, my
father was an engineer and I want
Ben to be as successful as my father …
We are very traditional in our family,
my parents were very conservative,
we are well-educated, we were raised
in a family where my father was the
breadwinner and my mother stayed
at home raising the children and we
were very religious. Although, I don't
follow religion as I used to do …

(Rena, interview)

Rafael:

I can see that you want to ensure that
tradition is passed to the next
generation.

Rena:

> Yes, for me it's important that Ben
> eventually decides to become an
> engineer … as part of the family
> tradition …

> (Rena, interview)

Rafael:

> If you don't mind me asking … how
> about Ben's sisters? Will you try to
> engage them with engineering?

Rena:

> No, they might do something related
> to design but not engineering …

> (Rena, interview)

For Rena, the understanding and awareness of her family values is paramount in securing its transmission between generations. Rena acknowledges that her family values come from a conventional family who played traditional roles at home, with her father being the breadwinner, and her mother a full-time housewife. Nonetheless, the priority for Rena seems to be the replication of her father's career by her son.

Rena's rhetoric seems to conceal the imposition of a prospective career pathway due to the conceptualisation and idealisation of previous family achievements. Therefore, it is necessary to make clear the difference between the idealisation of one particular aspiration (Rena wanting her son to become an engineer) and the influence that Rena exerts on her son by imposing a career choice.

Another, highly salient, element that has an impact on career choice is gender stereotyping, which may be in evidence for Rena, given the different careers to which she aspires for her son and her daughters. I recognise that gender stereotyping not only originates from parents' views and family values, but can also be shaped by peers, school environment, social circles, and society more generally (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). I consider that gender stereotyping in career choice remains a constitutive element, deeply embedded in family values in many modern families.

Parental influence can also be laden with pre-determined views of what genders are 'suitable' for some careers or vice versa. For example, depending on culture, family traditions and social constructions, some parents might be inclined to believe that gender and professional careers are strongly linked. It is not my intention to define what are parents' views on gender roles. However, during the data collection, I perceived that the way some parents think about careers and gender has a powerful impact on what careers they would like their children to choose. At the same time, I suggest that parents' views on gender stereotyping are not necessarily constructed from their personal visions of gender. As shown in the extract of my field notes below, I noted in the conversation with Rena that gender stereotypes might also play a key role in the decision-making process of career choice.

After an engineering class, Rena (Ben's mother) approached me.

Rena:

Rafael, I want to speak to you about a
concern I have about your
engineering classes …

(Rena, field notes)

Rafael:

Yes, Rena. How can I help you?

Rena:

You know that I'm not happy about you putting a female engineer to teach engineering to my son …

(Rena, field notes)

I said:

What is the problem with that?

Rena:

Well … that engineering should be taught by a male tutor and not a female one. This is not a good example for my child …

(Rena, field notes)

Rafael:

Rena, this is not about gender. The tutor that taught your child today is very able to do the job. She is a fully qualified engineer in the UK and has a PhD in civil engineering at Imperial. Rena, bear in mind that we don't look at genders. We look at how tutors' qualifications and they can communicate effectively.

Rena:

Don't get defensive. I'm just giving

you honest feedback. Engineers are

taught by male teachers, at least, this

is the way my father was taught. I

think you should look into this and

make changes …

(Rena, field notes)

From my dialogue with Rena, I infer that her construction of gender stereotypes concerning career choices is based more on the transmission of family values from generation to generation than on gender-associated inequalities and power imbalances. Rena seems to be concerned about traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes rather than male-dominated professions and gender power imbalances. It seems that her immediate concern is to ensure that the gender tradition is followed.

In addition to demonstrating a preference for specific activities and professional careers, most parental values and expectations can be seen in the norms they foster and model at home. While it is likely that parental values and expectations are conveyed within each family, the strength of their influence may depend on the closeness of the parent-child relationship. In other words, the parental influence on career choice can also be determined by the type of relationship between parents and children. For instance, if the relationship between parents and children is nurturing and supportive, children might perhaps be more likely to match their parents' expectations. Equally, parents might even heighten their expectations and support for their children to accomplish their career choice. On the other hand, if the relationship between parents and children is problematic, parental values, norms and behaviour seem less likely to be internalised by their children, with children less likely to follow their parents' norms, values and expectations (Chance, 2010).

In all, from a Vygotskyan stance, in understanding how parental motivations influence children's career choices, it is important to acknowledge the role of cultural context and social interaction. By identifying the role of parents as cultural mediators and scaffolders of their children's career aspirations, parents can be seen to foster an approach that includes their interests, values and aptitudes to empower children to pursue career paths aligned with their values and, hopefully, their children's aspirations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings of the study so as to provide an understanding of the complexity of children's and parents' perceptions of enrichment activities and how these activities can influence the way children experience and feel about being exposed to such activities. I explore what motivates parents to enrol their children in out-of-school hours enrichment programmes. Throughout, I focus on the key findings I deem most relevant to help answer both research questions.

In Chapter 1, I included the background to this research, the justification of this study and my professional background. Subsequently, I discussed the contextualisation of this study, my research questions, and my expectations and motivations for conducting this research. In Chapter 2, I brought together and discussed the relevant literature to provide a theoretical background and context within which the current research may be based. I introduced the concept of concerted cultivation, defined enrichment activities, and described the types of enrichment activities relevant to this research. I defined middle-class families for the purposes of this study I also examined the theoretical underpinning of schooling, the epistemology of enrichment education, Piaget's cognitive development theory, Vygotsky's social theory, the non-cognitive skills framework, and children's feelings using Bowlby's attachment theory and Bandura's social learning theory. In Chapter 3, I introduced and justified the research methodology I adopted for this study. I then discussed some of the approaches educational researchers use and examined the philosophical issues underpinning educational research. I discussed the methods of data collection I used in this study, addressed ethical considerations, and provides a research protocol that can be followed to ascertain the reliability, credibility, and validity of the research process and its findings. In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the analysis of the data I obtained

and discussed my findings. In this final chapter, I outline my conclusions and make some reflections about the research.

5.2 Children: Key findings and discussion

1) Children construct their identity through sociocultural mediation based on references to reward and recognition.

The influence of social and cultural factors on identity construction, including interactions with parents, peers and societal institutions such as schools, is a key area of study. Durkheim's (1956) work, as discussed in Chapter 2, is particularly significant in this context. He emphasised the role of schooling in socialising children into the norms, values and expectations of society, viewing schools as agents of socialisation that foster opportunities for social recognition and integration. This perspective contributes to a theoretical foundation for my discussion on how children build their sense of identity and self through interactions with peers and teachers and the internalisation of educational norms and practices.

Cultural and social mediation within the school context is fundamental for children's identity development. As previously described, Durkheim (1956) depicts that schooling serves as a mechanism that can contribute to cohesion by exerting a powerful influence on the formation of individuals. Within this context, the interplay between reward, recognition, schooling and children is a fundamental aspect of children's identity formation. The experience of reward and recognition practised in schools significantly impacts children's attitudes towards their goals.

In the context of this study, children appear to have a favourable disposition towards enrichment activities. Likewise, children have a more positive experience towards what they regard as engaging and fun experiences rather than traditional school-like activities, for instance, not learning from a textbook but learning by working on hands-on activities. Besides, enrichment activities seem to be a

powerful motivator because such activities encompass a wide range of experiences designed to enhance children's learning; within such activities, children seem to appreciate rewards, whether receiving feedback from a tutor, receiving a certificate for their efforts or simply the intrinsic reward of completing a challenging task.

These findings contribute to answering the research question: "How do children experience and feel being exposed to enrichment activities?". A successful task completion is a catalyst for feelings of accomplishment. Children perceive that achieving 'something' not only brings about a sense of reward and recognition from peers and adults, but also triggers positive emotions such as self-efficacy, happiness, competence and a sense of belonging in the social environment. Children who receive positive reinforcement and recognition are more likely to develop a stronger sense of achievement and belonging in the sociocultural system they are in. Conversely, children who face barriers to rewards and recognition may experience negative emotions such as sadness, stress and anxiety, which can hinder their motivation and sense of belonging in their sociocultural environments.

2) Children perceive enrichment activities as an instrument for knowledge acquisition and the development of non-cognitive skills.

As discussed in Chapter 2, enrichment activities can be understood as experiences inside and outside the classroom that are not formally graded (Frances and Kristen, 2005). In this study, enrichment activities are understood as extracurricular activities delivered in out-of-school hours. I focused on enrichment activities based on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) that are not necessarily aligned with a formal school curriculum.

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children actively construct knowledge through interactions and they acquire knowledge through assimilation and accommodation, whereby they integrate new experiences into existing cognitive mental structures and modify their knowledge based on new information (Piaget, 1983). Enrichment activities, in essence, serve as a tool for children to

actively construct knowledge; such activities provide a platform for children to learn new concepts and ideas, which they can then integrate into their existing knowledge. This process aligns with Piaget's theory, where children's perceptions of enrichment activities are influenced by their cognitive stage.

For instance, younger children in the preoperational stage tend to focus on concrete experiences, while older children engage in more abstract thinking and planning (Piaget, 1983). Effectively, children appeared to experience learning activities differently when participating in enrichment activities. On the one hand, some children perceived their participation in enrichment activities as an instrument to learn more, to become 'smarter' or to be more advanced than their peers. On the other hand, some children experience enrichment activities as an additional opportunity to socialise, make friends, do something enjoyable on the weekend or develop new skills unrelated to acquiring new knowledge.

In this context, Piaget's cognitive stages and Bowles and Gintis's (1976) Four Cs framework provide insight into why children perceive enrichment activities as helpful for developing non-cognitive skills. For Piaget, older children, within the concrete operational stage, can develop more elaborate thinking; children can think abstractly and therefore are more inclined to develop creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication skills as they can question assumptions, weigh evidence and make judgments (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

Overall, the children in this study primarily experienced enrichment activities as a path for personal growth and skills development. The children who attended this enrichment programme often perceived these activities as a source of enjoyment, excitement and happiness. However, those children who experienced parental pressure or were compelled to attend a specific subject expressed negative feelings such as anger, upset and frustration. Mostly, though, children's experiences in the enrichment programmes were characterised by a sense of engagement, experiential learning and a supplementary approach to their standard academic activities and socialisation.

3) Children can experience parental pressure as a source of positive guidance and support.

Children who were put under some form of pressure by their parents to attend out-of-school enrichment activities but were supported, meaning that they received encouragement, assistance and resources, perceived parental pressure as a source of support and guidance. Consequently, they were more inclined to express positive feelings such as joy, gratefulness, pride and excitement. Additionally, supported children may interpret parental pressure as a catalyst to mirror their parents' academic achievements. This suggests that when children are supported, they tend to perceive parental pressure as a means of instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability, which can be viewed as a positive outcome, validating the role of educators in encouraging such perceptions.

In contrast, the analysis also demonstrates that the practice of providing children with the best opportunities and resources and the consequent parents' expectations of their children can sometimes have a detrimental effect on how children experience and perceive attending out-of-school-hours activities. Perceptions of parental pressure can produce a significant sense of pressure in their children, particularly when parents take little account of their children's interests or aptitudes. The analysis also shows that some children do not talk about their emotions or feelings about being pressured by their parents. The lack of communication can lead children to feel anger, frustration, stress and sadness.

5.3 Parents: Key findings and discussion

1) Parents' motivations to succeed in reproducing intergenerational family patterns are driven by the transmission of social status, social and cultural capital, and family values.

Lareau (2002) argues that the transmission of specific social and parenting values differs depending on the parenting style. Lareau links the transmission of family values with concerted cultivation and describes how middle-class parents transmit, nurture and constantly foster the transmission of their values to construct their children's social status and cultural capital. More recently, Vincent and Maxwell (2015) explore a peripheral factor that links concerted cultivation to a parenting style primarily associated with middle-class parental experiences, namely an instrumental focus on an all-round education to secure skills, knowledge and qualities for future success. Therefore, the intergenerational transmission of values is typically assumed to result from children's internalisation of their parents' attitudes, norms and expectations. Hence, children's awareness and understanding of family values predominantly mould their academic and socio-economic goals. Parents constantly seek to secure a successful transmission of their family values and to influence their children's identity and social and cultural capital.

Some parents intensify certain parenting styles and instil elevated cultural and social opportunities to give their children the best chances for success. The analysis emphasises that parenting styles are not just a set of techniques but deeply rooted in parents identity, formed by social and cultural capital, family values, social status and many other elements that contribute to parents' understanding of their identity. Correspondingly, parents' desires for social reproduction are also significant in helping establish a clear motivation to enrol their children in enrichment courses. Parents' social reproduction agency seeks to transfer their social class and status to their children by fostering early academic success.

The analysis also shows that the awareness and understanding of family values are central to shaping children's educational and academic goals. How families are formed and organised influences children's motivational patterns concerning their future education and academic success. Family values are moulded by cultural experience, individual and collective experiences within the family, education, social status and financial standing, among other factors. In developing and securing the transmission of family values, parents have two fundamental priorities: 1) the

prolongation of family values across generations; and 2) the construction of children's individual and social identity within a social context.

The main motivation of parents to engage their children in enrichment activities, from a parenting style viewpoint, varies, depending on their career choice and strategy. Socio-economic factors appear to be a constant key aspect underlying parental choices and influences. Another important aspect that helps define the motivation of parents to choose certain parenting styles is their stance on educational choices and their understanding of social and cultural capital and how parents situate and compare themselves with other parents or families within their social circle.

To conclude, the transmission of family values is a tangible manifestation of parental social class and its connection to social status, financial circumstances and parental influence; this underscores the broader societal implications of intergenerational family patterns and the role of parents in shaping these dynamics.

2) Parents' motivations to expose their children to enrichment activities can be induced by the notion of early exposure of children to career options.

Understanding family values is a significant factor that defines most approaches to parenting. Irwin and Elley (2011) show that parents' behaviour is formed by a range of attitudes, given the importance of education, good upbringing, level of income and educational success. Thus, the role of parents as the main cultivators of their children's future success is particularly focused on investing in their children so that they will do well academically, sometimes with the aim for them to have access to a wide range of opportunities, though sometimes parents have quite fixed views as to what their children's future careers should be. This investment, often seen as a form of empowerment, is a testament to parents belief in their children's potential and their commitment to their future success.

A significant motivation for parents to encourage their children to engage actively in enrichment activities is that many middle-class families are aware of the value of a good education. Consequently, parents tend to invest significantly and simultaneously in several resource streams, such as tutoring, enrichment activities, educational trips and so forth, to foster opportunities for their children to advance in their academic and personal development.

Parents often view enrichment activities as opportunities for their children to experience traditional and non-traditional subjects. By 'traditional', I mean subjects that are part of the school curriculum, such as English, mathematics, and science, among many others. 'Non-traditional' school subjects, such as engineering, robotics, debating, public speaking and other vocational or hobby-based subjects, are not part of the typical school curriculum.

The analysis highlights the potential of enrichment activities to shape children's future careers. Many parents are guided by their aspiration to steer their children towards a specific career, using enrichment activities to expose their children to various topics. This approach aims to ignite their children's curiosity, laying a solid foundation for future career exploration and decision-making. The analysis further reveals that parents who actively encourage their children's participation in out-of-school-hours enrichment activities are motivated by a desire to empower their children to explore and develop non-cognitive skills, and this paves the way for a specific career path in the future.

5.4 Strengths and limitations of the study and areas for future research

A strength of this research study is that its key findings were elicited and are underpinned from the experiences of children and parents who were directly involved in participating in out-of-school-hours enrichment activities. Accordingly, I had the opportunity to examine what children and parents feel, think, perceive,

understand and experience when engaged in such activities. The inclusion of children's and parents' views and perceptions significantly strengthened the key findings of this research as it provides information about children's feelings and how these feelings have a mutual relationship with parenting styles, social capital, cultural capital and family values. More generally, a further strength is that the methods I used in this study helped ensure that the research process was transparent, replicable and expandable, therefore enabling the possibility for future research that may take into consideration children's and parents' experiences and feelings when engaged with enrichment activities.

The fundamental limitation of this research is the inability to generalise its findings. The observations and findings described in this study are true for this research, which was undertaken in a single organisation providing out-of-school-hours enrichment activities for children whose parents could afford to pay for these.

The fact that this research was conducted with a focus on middle-class families (mainly because of the cost of the academic fee, which is around £2,500 per academic year, per child, per subject) and taking into consideration the specific age range of the participants (8-11 years old) may trigger questions about whether the findings of this research can be relevant for educational studies conducted with underprivileged families living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, where resources and opportunities are not so readily available.

A further limitation is also a strength, namely that the fieldwork was conducted in an institution that I know very well because I own it and manage it. The research is therefore an example of 'insider' research. The adverse consequences of this for my research were minimised by my not researching the views of any of those teaching on the programme (and therefore employed by me). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that some participants, particularly some parents, may have been more reticent about talking openly with me than they might have been if talking to an external researcher. At the same time, my knowledge and understanding of the programme, and the fact that I was the obvious point of reference for parents with strong

opinions, meant that I was able to gather relevant data that might not have been available to an external researcher.

From this perspective, in this study, I endeavoured to ensure that the research process was transparent, replicable and expandable. Nevertheless, a fundamental limitation of this study is the inability to generalise its findings. To replicate the validity of this research, it would be worth considering conducting a similar study including a larger number of participants and extending the age range of the participants. Another important factor that could help to strengthen the validity of this research would be to conduct a comparable study focusing on socio-economically disadvantaged families. Likewise, it would also worth considering conducting similar research in countries that have lower levels of economic inequality.

5.5 Recommendations

I make four principal recommendations for future research and professional practice:

1) The purpose of enrichment education needs to be redefined. Equally, the reason for planning and delivering enrichment education activities needs to be repurposed. Many schools, state-funded educational institutions, museums, independent educational entities and their educators and practitioners would greatly benefit from better understanding of what enrichment education entails, its purpose and its impact on children's academic and mental wellbeing. Raising awareness of in-depth understanding of enrichment education, best practice and the potential development of the skills it may facilitate in children is likely to make an impact on possible measurable outcomes that can be academically and personally advantageous for those taking part in such activities.

2) Work towards deepening the understanding, pedagogy and application of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) subjects by teachers in schools, in charge of planning and delivering enrichment activities, museum educators, and STEAM educators in general. In many cases the lack of basic understanding of STEAM education and what it entails can lead to shallow understanding and poor pedagogy in STEAM subjects. It would be valuable for researchers in schools and in other educational institutions, particularly those that provide out-of-school-hours enrichment education, to conduct longitudinal studies that survey children's understanding of STEAM education and examine how engaging with STEAM subjects, from an early age, influences future career choices. I suggest establishing subject-related comparisons and taking into consideration children's feelings, values and beliefs with the aim of determining and capturing if or how curricular and extra-curricular (enrichment) subjects are interweaved with aspects of children's construction of their personalities and the way they understand and experience the subjects in real-life situations.

3) It is typically assumed that parents seek the best resources and opportunities for their children, regardless of their socio-economic status. What is perhaps less apparent is how wealthy and underprivileged families perceive, understand and experience any enrichment activities as an integral part of their children's education. Therefore, I believe that there is ample scope to develop new comparative and longitudinal studies that focus on: 1) surveying how parenting styles affect children within affluent families and within less privileged families; and 2) widening the understanding of excessive, moderate and limited parental pressure on children's mental health. The findings from such research might help inform and influence UK policy on children's wellbeing within the state and private educational sectors.

4) There is scope for furthering existing research on the impact of enrichment activities, the acquiring and development of non-cognitive skills, so-called soft skills, and their impact on creating social mobility opportunities. Examining the significant influence of extra-curricular activities on children from a

disadvantaged socio-economic background, including their educational achievements and aspirations, could lead to a better understanding of how to improve underprivileged children's confidence, academic achievement and social interactions.

5.6. Conclusion and personal reflection

In concluding this chapter, I offer my own personal reflections on the study and highlight the contribution that I believe I have made to new understandings of enrichment education, linking these to my own professional practice.

In this study, I presented an approach to understanding the impact of enrichment activities by researching how children experience and feel being exposed to such activities and by examining parents' motivations to enrol their children in out-of-school hours enrichment programmes.

I hope this study helps to show how the planning and delivery of enrichment activities should be repurposed, bearing in mind children's perceptions and feelings and parental motivations. I believe that the recommendations I have made in this study could lead to a better understanding of what drives middle-class parents to constantly foster better academic and social opportunities for their children.

At the same time, I have identified and raised awareness of the importance of balancing parental pressures, so that children feel supported and motivated, taking into consideration that positive parental pressure can be perceived as a source of guidance and help. I have also shown that inappropriate parental pressure can have a detrimental effect on children's mental health and overall wellbeing. I particularly reflect on children's experiences and the how positive parenting styles could address children's anxieties and stress; I also reflect on how new opportunities for the healthy socio-emotional development of children might be fostered.

The finding on parenting styles might contribute to developing enrichment educational programmes that can protect children from excessive pressure from their parents. Therefore, I advocate a deeper understanding of what it is to be human and how societal, cultural and academic forces contribute to making an individual make certain decisions and how the above-mentioned forces might help in the construction of an individual from a young age.

I believe that through the case study approach I have been able to identify and have been helped to reflect on the contemporary phenomenon of the impact of human interaction on activities situated in a specific and meaningful context. Likewise, I ponder that the case study approach contributed to define and keep grounded in context the phenomenon of enrichment activities and the situations around the phenomenon itself. As a researcher, I believe that I have contributed to studying human experiences and motivations within the enrichment education context that could help to improve and advance good practice for enrichment educators within the private sector, and possibly the state sector too.

Finally, my overall conclusion of this study is that there is a need to repurpose the planning and delivery of enrichment activities. There is also a need to identify and understand factors such as children's personalities and feelings, with the aim of fostering and supporting children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, that is often influenced by the style of parenting they receive. Parents, teachers, enrichment educators and mental health professionals must pay more attention to parenting styles that appear to be negative in their effects on children.

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APPENDIX 1: CONSENT LETTER FOR PARENTS TO ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO BE INTERVIEWED

Date

Mr/Ms [insert]
Address
Post code

Re: Case study research: face-to-face individual Interviews.
Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you requesting permission for me to conduct a face-to-face individual interview with your child.

The interview is part of a research project I am conducting at University College London Institute of Education as part of my postgraduate studies. Your child's school has been purposely selected to participate, which the Head teacher has agreed.

The proposed interview should take up no more than 45 minutes of your child's time. Any information your child provides throughout the interview will be confidential to me, which means that neither your child nor their school will be identified. Interview transcripts and other notes derived from the interviews will be made anonymous and will not be kept at school, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Also, your child will be allowed to withdraw from the research at any time.

The central aim of my research is to explore students' responses to enrichment activities and to determine which activities may be most effective for future enrichment programmes.

If you wish to participate in the proposed research, please sign the attached consent form and send it back to school by date.

The academic supervisor of this research project is Professor Michael Reiss who can be contacted via this email address: mxxxxx@ioe.ac.uk

Should you require further information about the research please do not hesitate to contact me via this email address: rxxxxxxxxx_ve@xxxxxx.com if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Rafael Hernandez

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

Joint Consent form (Child and Parent)
Please read and sign this consent for with your child

Child:
1. I have read the information letter about the interviews. I agree to participate in the research.
(Please tick)

☐

2. I am also aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time. I have discussed and agreed this with my parents/carers.
(Please tick)

☐

3. I have discussed and agreed my participation in the research with my parents/carers.
(Please tick)   ☐

Parent:
1. I have read the information letter about the Interviews.
I agree for my child to take part in the research.

(Please tick)   ☐

2. I am also aware that my child can withdraw from the research at any time. I have discussed and agreed this with him/her.
 (Please tick)

☐
3. I allow my child to be interviewed. I have discussed and agreed this with my child.

(Please tick)   ☐

Name (child): _____Signed: _____

Name (parent/carer): _____Signed: _____

Date_____

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT LETTER FOR PARENTS TO ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRES

Mr/Ms [insert]
Address
Post code

Re: Case study research: questionnaires.
Dear Parent/carer,

I am writing to you requesting permission for me to conduct a questionnaire with your child at the school.

The questionnaire is part of a research project for University College London Institute of Education. Your child's school has been purposely selected to participate, which the Head teacher has agreed.

The proposed questionnaire should take up no more than 20 minutes of your child's time. Any information your child provides throughout the questionnaire will be confidential to me, which means that neither your child nor their school will be identified. Questionnaires will be made anonymous and will not be kept at school, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Also, your child will be allowed to withdraw from the research at any time.

The central aim of my research is to explore students' responses to enrichment activities and to determine which activities may be most effective for future enrichment programmes.

If you wish your child to participate in the proposed research, please sign the attached consent form and bring it back to school by date.

The academic supervisor of this research project is Professor Michael Reiss who can be contacted via this email address: mxxxxx@ioe.ac.uk

Should you require further information about the research please do not hesitate to contact me via this email address: rxxxxxxxxx_ve@xxxxxx.com if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Rafael Hernandez

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRES

Join Consent form (Child and Parent)
Please read and sign this consent for with your child

Child:

1. I have read the information letter about the questionnaires. I agree to participate in the research.
(Please tick)

☐

2. I am also aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time. I have discussed and agreed this with my parents/carers.
(Please tick) ☐

3. I have discussed and agreed my participation in the research with my parents/carers.
(Please tick) ☐

Parent:

1. I have read the information letter about the questionnaires.
I agree with my child to take part in the research.

(Please tick) ☐

2. I am also aware that my child can withdraw from the research at any time. I have discussed and agreed this with him/her.
(Please tick) ☐

3. I allow my child to complete the questionnaire. I have discussed and agreed this with my child.
(Please tick) ☐

Name (child): _____Signed: _____

Name (parent/carer): _____Signed: _____

Date_____

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN

1. What do you think was the most important contribution from the Saturday class(es) to your education?

2. Do you think the Saturday class(es) helped you to do better at school? Please explain your answer.

3. Do you think the Saturday class(es) helped you learn more than just being at school?

4. How did you feel about the Saturday class(es)? Were you excited to wake up on a Saturday morning to come to the course or did you really have to make an effort for it? Explain why.

5. How do you compare some of the activities/experiments you did in the enrichment course with what you normally do at school? Is there something different?

6. Do you think that the enrichment classes taught you any values that are similar to the ones learn at home or at school?

7. Can you think of two 'relevant things' that the enrichment course(s) helped you to learn or develop that might help you at your school?

8. Do you feel the Saturday class(es) motivated you to the university you want to go to in the future like Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, etc? Please tell me How and/or Why.

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. What was your main motivation to enrol your child/children to participate in the enrichment course(s)?

2. What do you feel was the most important contribution from the enrichment course(s) to your child's/ children's education?

3. What was your main expectation from the enrichment course(s) in regards to your child's/children's overall educational experience?

4. Do you think the extra-curricular activities provided in the course influenced your child's/children's academic expectations and social aspirations?

5. Do you think enriching activities on Saturdays were beneficial to your child's/children's education? Explain why.

6. What were your parental priorities in terms of your child's/children's academic and social expectations?

7. Do you feel the enrichment course contributed to match the academic and social expectations you have for your child/children? How?

8. What were your motivations about exposing your child/children to new social and cultural experiences? What did this mean to you?

9. What were you expecting to gain from exposing your child/children to enrichment courses?

10. Would you regard your child/children differently, academically speaking, now after they attended the enrichment course (s)? Please explain your answer.

11. How do you think enrichment courses contributed for your child/children build their own social and academic preferences in terms of future academic and social opportunities?

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW WITH A PARENT

Q1. Interviewer: Thank you for coming today, I appreciate your support. I would like to ask you a question about your motivations to enrol your child to participate in an enrichment course. For instance, I noticed that your child is attending some of the courses on Saturdays. Do you have a particular preference about the course that she is attending? what motivated you to get your child to attend an additional programme of study on Saturdays?

PARENT: So, I think if we look at the Saturday programme... hmm… I think our goals have a base. So, we started with the science programme and my child does science at school and we saw this programme... To be honest, I am interested to see if my daughter likes science. When she finishes her homework, she normally asks questions about science, chemistry and the universe ... I think for a child who is six years is pretty remarkable that she always wants to go further and keeps asking more questions after my explanations. I think a friend recommended us if I remember rightly so she [the friend] thought the programme was very good. So… I think the motivation was to feed her curiosity and I think enrichment is very good to try to expand her experience, to try to expand her thinking… and it's not so much that we had a need that we thought oh gosh! we need to do this...! It was really a recommendation from a friend that saw the class and we thought that my child could do it... This is really good and engaging so we thought it would be a fun Saturday activity for her.

Q2. Interviewer: You were previously mentioning that your child likes science and then when she went back to her school she spoke about what she did on Saturday. What do you feel will be the most important contribution from the enrichment course to your child's education?

PARENT: I think she gets many things. I think she gets exposure to a different approach to science and interests in science. The idea is just to spark her interest. She is curious, as you know, she asks lots of questions and she enjoys that sharing with others. Oh, I didn't have a chance to tell you about my friends who will come over to visit us on Friday and she wants to do a 'science play day'… She wants her mother to organise a science show by organising experiments they do together with her friends rather than playing with dolls and making cupcakes so I think it is a wonderful exposure in that way…

Q3. Interviewer: Apart from that point of view about the exposure she can get… What do you expect from the enrichment course as an overall educational experience? Do you think the enrichment courses contribute to complement what your child does at school? Don't you think that these type of science questions are normal for someone who is aged 5 and 6?

PARENT: I think at the age of six or seven is too early to aim for that. This is more about the enrichment science. That is fair point, However, as a father, I do think

that it is important to stimulate my child's curiosity at this point … The school where she goes to actually focuses on science a lot more that many other girls schools do… and she will do experiments at school… where they do observations and measure things, you know, they do in the class or it varies so it can be around things about nutrition and other things and so on… But I think that widening that experience and giving that interest at an early age is a… is a… a plus point. Another good thing about the robotics [course] in some ways the robotics fits into the same way… Ahh… probably that is a strong complement to what they do at school, as ICT, as they call it, is not particularly strong. They go to a computer lab to do a bit of typing and a bit of game playing whereas…

Interviewer: But it is not that they actually do ICT as such? So they have a computer there and then what happens? Do they learn about excel, word? Power point?

PARENT: Well, they do a bit of Excel there to start to familiarise themselves which is good, is good but…. is not that… is not that… good.

[The interview was briefly stopped here because of a child persistently crying in the background so we needed to move from where we were sitting]

PARENT: Let's stop briefly and let's move to the other side maybe.

Interviewer: I think it should be nicer and quieter here.

PARENT: Yeah, I agree.

[Interview resumes here]

Interviewer: Yeah, we were mentioning about…

PARENT: sorry, is that recording?

**Interviewer: yes, it is recording. I will keep checking it to make sure it is recording so we do not have to repeat this interview again… [This is the second time we run this interview as the first time I did not realise that the recording device stopped working a few seconds after we started the first interview].
I see that your daughter is enrolled in science and robotics. As you mentioned a few moments ago, you seek to fulfil her curiosity in science. But, why robotics? Does she have curiosity in robotics too or do you think that robotics is a subject that children should learn nowadays?**

PARENT: yeah, yeah, so I think the robotics for me… brings a bit of more programming and control… so it is interesting that I was talking to a parent this

morning about robotics and he said: "well, I am not sure my girl would like to build robots…"

Interviewer: By the way, how did it go about talking to that parent? Because he was very curious about talking to another parent whose children have attended the course [a camp]. Because, he said: "Oh I don't know anyone, I want to see how it is" Do you have reference from parents? And I said… I cannot give you anyone's details but if you go on a Saturday I can introduce you to some of the parents who have been with us [summer camp] and then I saw you [at the reception] and that's the reason why I introduce you to each other… that was unexpected…

Interviewer: but, OK… About the extra-curricular activities: do you think they will increase your child's academic and social expectations? Do they have any impact on your child? Because, she is already highly motivated anyway.

PARENT: It was fine. Yeah. Yes, she is.

Q4. Interviewer: Highly motivated.... Well, I think your child is exceptionally highly motivated. Well, going back to the question: What do you think about the extra-curricular activities? Do you think they are going to make an impact on the way your child perceives education?

PARENT: I think what we are keen to do is give her an exposure to things... So, I think, again in the sciences, as we talked about, gives an exposure to a wide range of things from the dissections to the chemistry so there is no expectation for her to learn very much as some of the material she sees in the course it goes… above her..? So, we don't expect her to come across, as she knew these things… So we are not expecting her to know all this things but once again…it is about that exposure and interest in science and the same for robotics… It's like: OK. You can do this…you can… control that. For someone who is determine to control…explore…therefore we will see how she develops an interest. That need [of exploring] will give her more exposure and that can spark her interest on what she is doing…

Q5. Interviewer: do you think enriching activities on Saturdays can be beneficial to your child?

PARENT: Yes, because she is constantly exposed to things that she won't see at her school. For example: robotics. She doesn't see that at her school but she does see science at school but she doesn't get a chance to do the practical activities as she does [practicals] here on Saturdays.

Q6-8. Interviewer: How would you define your current social status? [Upper middle class, middle class] Do you see you current social status as a source of inspiration and motivation for your child to do well academically, socially and economically?

PARENT: I'm not sure about that… but obviously education is very important to us. We value that, we pay for it, we pay for a private school, and we are looking forward to be inspired by other people who also have a keen interest in their children to learn and these classes are a chance to enrich what she is doing. But at the same time, we are trying to see what can be her passion, what interest her… because, we are lucky you know… that she shares interest in Mandarin…she shares a Mandarin lesson with a friend then she is very interested in Mandarin so then she interested… She is not interested in music lessons and that's a pain… but let's give her a chance…hah! hah! hah..!

Interviewer: OK. How about English? Because she reads a lot…

PARENT: That interests her… She does read a lot… And we think we are blessed but that is something that she does it anyway which is why her vocabulary is very strong…and she has a curiosity and in the evenings. She always has a question and she asks me difficult questions such as: "Why do we have money?" and then she asks me the same question the next night and then she says: "OK, I've got that bit" but she asks again: "Why do we have to have money?" "But you know why we just can exchange goods?" so, she has that curiosity… so that goes back to what her motivation is… and then that makes me think… How do you go…how do you unleash that?

Interviewer: and then she asks you any type of questions?

PARENT: Yes! She asks why do we have a Queen? Why did we have to have a King and [a] Queen?

Interviewer: well, we normally get questions like that from your child as well…

PARENT: hah, hah, hah…

Interviewer: I normally refer your child, to my colleagues, when she starts asking those types of questions…

PARENT: hah, hah, hah…

Interviewer: Especially when the questions are related to science. Just for the science questions…

Q10. Interviewer: About your parental priorities: what do you feel your current parental priorities are in relation to your child's academic and social well being?

PARENT: What we are trying to do is to expose our daughter to a range of subjects, then will see which one she likes the most. Certainly, she has a bold curiosity for science but by exposing her to a range of subjects, we will see what her interests are. Then, we will support her to pursue her best interest …I think the priority for us is that she is engaged, that she is curious and loves to learn… as you see she gets

engaged and the aim is that she'll do well but if she has nothing to engage with then she becomes bored and then she becomes a little terror… Then, there is that, that motivation and then responsibility to go… OK… but is not that we feel that we need to schedule everything… Also, you know, that by dropping off my daughter for two courses from 9:30 am until 2:00 pm on Saturdays that means that I can get quality time with my wife with no one around while you look after our child … it is always a good thing to do on a Saturday morning, isn't it? … hah! hah! hah…! as well… so that is part of the motivation…

We think… oh my goodness… what do we need to do to improve my child's motivation. But, as I said before I think this is more about widening rather than anything else…we have no idea what this is going to bring to…

Interviewer: That is interesting, because you know one of the main comments that we get from other parents is that they don't mind paying a course for a year, of paying two or three courses at once because they say that their son or their daughter are going to be even more motivated in the future. Normally, we have those comments from parents. So, for you why do you think it is better paying for an independent school rather than sending your child to a state school?

PARENT: The choice for a private school is to get an increased attention because we get smaller class sizes…and much more consistency in good teaching because in state schools there are a variety of things and teaching varies…. Also because at her age it is advantageous for her to go to a single sex school…and I think also because it is a selective site, you know, the school we applied for is different because of the way they do things…

Interviewer: Yeah…

PARENT: which is a bit unfortunate but that is the reality of…

Interviewer: I read on The Guardian Education that some parents like securing their children's future by enrolling them in a very good school which is normally an independent school or a at least enrolling their children in a state school located within an affluent post code such as SW3, W8, etc. So… it seems that the main motivation those parents have to enrol their children in a renowned school is to secure their children's future through attending prestigious schools and making friends within the same social circle whose parents have important social connections. What do you think about that?

PARENT: I think it depends on the individual parent's motivations because most of the parents who live within the same neighborhood they can afford to send their children to the best private schools. The reasons can be similar to ours but the main motivation would be to attend a school that is going to open doors for her [his child] in the future. Myself, I grew up in north London where there are good schools but I had the chance to go to an independent school. That gave me the opportunity to do well academically so I am successful in what I do professionally and I also have

good friends that I went to school with that have also been successful. Perhaps, this can be a motivation. We send our daughter to a good school where education is highly valued and we sense that this is going to help her in the future both academically and socially.

Q11-13. Interviewer. In terms of the enrichment activities and your academic expectations you have for your child. Do you think the enrichment activities she attends get her closer to your academic and social expectations?

PARENT: I think it is early days especially because she is so young… she is only six at the moment so there is a long way to go… the main thing for us is that she starts exploring different things outside the school to see what sparks her interest. We don't know where this is going to take us… I would say we are in an 'exploratory phase'. I think this is going to be an ongoing thing that we will develop over time. The enrichment classes might certainly help to develop her interest in a range of subjects or disciplines and they will also help her to have a different vision, learn through projects and make friends within our same neighbourhood but I think there is not a very specific goal to achieve for now. The idea is to stimulate her curiosity and widen her exposure to things that she would not learn at school.

Q14-15. Interviewer. Finally, this is my last question. What are you expecting to gain from exposing your daughter to the enrichment activities? Would you say that your child would be academically differently after attending the enrichment activities?

PARENT: hmm, I think strictly thinking about enrichment we are not expecting her to be academically well advanced. Gosh… the enrichment classes will not take her where she needs to be science wise, etc… because I think it is again about curiosity… because to be open and honest when looking at the lesson plans [programme overview] it is good material but I don't feel she's been accelerated for but… it is primary, it is for primary level or even early secondary level… is not that she is learning the bones of the body, she is not learning animal classification type, she is not learning the traditional building blocks of science…but, but my memory doesn't go back to the early days of primary but it goes back to my A levels so I am very seduced by this word 'enrichment' rather than 'academically'… because academically she is not further ahead… but we know that she is lucky to have a more broader experience that can help her think and see the world. I think what we want is to provide her with tools for her to interpret the world and understand it rather than saying that she is academically outstanding… For example, we had a bit of experience with Kumon [private tutoring company that focuses on teaching mathematics and English] with her…

Interviewer: Oh, I see you've done that and how did it go with it? Because, I heard mixed reviews about Kumon…

PARENT: It says what it does on the tin… Kumon puts parents to work.

Interviewer: so, is it true that parents have to do the hard work…?

PARENT: well, well, yeah, parents have to mark the work but it is very much at their levels and they move through it and they are learning a very hard skill and my child does not like because it is not interested in that…but the whole underlining key point about Kumon is teaching a raw skill do mental maths in your head then accelerate her learning etc… but… if I go back to what helped her and the fact that she can talk about in her school interview about her science lessons she has been doing with you about her dissections and her experiments so I think it is a big plus for her…

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your support.

PARENT: Thank you. Please let me know if you need further clarifications on any of the answers.

Interviewer: Thanks. I will get back in touch with you if I need to ask you anything else.

PARENT: That's fine, we can do it over the phone, over Skype or we can meet again.

Interviewer: Thanks once again. I appreciate your support. Let's go back to the classroom…

APPENDIX 8: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN

1. Do you think your Saturday class motivated you to learn more about science/robotics/civil engineering?

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

2 . Do you feel the Saturday class helped you to better compared to your friends at your school?

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

3 . Do you see your parents/carers, siblings and family in general as an example and motivation to do well at school?

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

4. Do you think your Saturday class helped you to do better at school?

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

5. Enrichment classes will made me be better in the way I learn science and maths at school?

Strongly agree ☐   A g r e e ☐   Maybe ☐   D i s a g r e e ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

6. Attending enrichment classes made me smarter at school and when visiting my friends who go to other schools.

Strongly agree ☐   A g r e e ☐   Maybe ☐   D i s a g r e e ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

7. My friends at school should have joined the Saturday class to get better at their subjects.

Strongly agree ☐   A g r e e ☐   Maybe ☐   D i s a g r e e ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

8. My family (mum, dad, older brother or sister) motivated me to do better with my future studies.

Strongly agree ☐   A g r e e ☐   Maybe ☐   D i s a g r e e ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

9. Attending the Saturday class helped me to do well at school.

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

10. My parents wanted me to attend the Saturday class for me to do well at school.

☺ Yes ☐   😐 M a y b e ☐   ☹ No ☐

11. Did the Saturday class help you learn any skills? For example: problem-solving skills, working in teams, resilience?
Please explain your answer:

12. Do you think your Saturday class helped you to do better at school? Please explain your answer: